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RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

From the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds, in the possession of Mr. Horace Noble Pym of Brasted, England

The Riverside Literature Series

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

BY

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

COLLATED AND EDITED BY

HANSON HART WEBSTER

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

In editing this comedy, I have reprinted, with slight abbreviations, the biographical sketch of Sheridan written by Professor Joseph Quincy Adams, Jr., Ph.D., of Cornell University, for his edition of *The Rivals*, published in the Riverside Literature Series in 1910. For several pages in the account of English Sentimental Comedy, I am indebted to Professor Thomas H. Dickinson of the University of Wisconsin. The passages from Mr. Walter Sichel's writings are quoted by special arrangement with him. The notes are the result of my own research except where specific acknowledgments are made. I am indebted especially to the work of Professor Brander Matthews of Columbia University, Professor George Henry Nettleton of Yale University, Mr. George A. Aitken and Mr. Calvin S. Brown, earlier editors of the Dramas of Sheridan. To Mr. Thomas G. Goodwin, formerly Instructor in English in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, I wish to express my thanks for many helpful suggestions, for a final examination of the complete manuscript and for assistance in reading the proof.

The text here printed follows the version adopted by Thomas Moore for the edition of Sheridan's Dramatic Works published by him in 1821. This has ever since been accepted as a definitive version, yet it does not appear to have been reprinted with complete exactness by other editors who have prepared the comedy for students' reading.

H. H. Webster.

Boston, *February 16, 1917.*

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INTRODUCTION

I

SHERIDAN'S CAREER

In Sheridan's progenitors we find in ample measure those qualities of mind which made him illustrious in two separate careers — as playwright and as parliamentarian. His grandfather was the Reverend Thomas Sheridan, D.D., of Dublin, well known to contemporaries for his learning and wit, and still remembered as the intimate friend of Dean Swift. The latter found the doctor's companionship so pleasant that for some years he reserved for him at the Deanery a room hospitably named "Sheridan." His esteem for the doctor may be summed up by quoting the first line of one of his Latin verses: — **His grandfather**

Deliciæ Sheridan musarum, dulcis amice!

The playwright's father, Thomas Sheridan, was likewise a man of great mental vigor, and of such activity as kept him much in the public eye. For several years he was conspicuous as the reform manager of the Theatre Royal in Dublin; later, as an actor, he shared with Garrick the applause of London playgoers; and, finally, he distinguished himself as a fashionable teacher of oratory, and a reformer of pronunciation. For a time his instruction was the rage among persons of rank and fortune. Mr. Sichel observes that "for one of his courses in 1762, no less than sixteen hundred subscribed at a guinea apiece, and bought his publications at 'half-a-guinea in boards.'" [1] Both Oxford and Cambridge conferred upon him honorary degrees; the authorities of Edinburgh, upon his visit there, voted him the freedom of the city; and the King, to further his plans of a great pronouncing dictionary, granted him a pen- **His father**

[1] Walter Sichel, *Sheridan*, I, 244.

sion of £200 a year. But his schemes of reforming the spoken language were Quixotic. Dr. Samuel Johnson, who had once been his friend, openly ridiculed his teaching of oratory, and sneered at his proposed dictionary.

His mother

To his mother, however, more than to his father, Sheridan was indebted for his qualities of mind. She was the daughter of a Dublin rector, the Reverend Philip Chamberlaine, D.D., a man with a strong personality and a keen sense of humor. Although her father forbade that she be taught the art of writing, at the age of fifteen she became the author of a romance, which, after her death, was published and adapted to the stage. When in 1746 the Kelly rioters wrecked the Theatre Royal in Dublin, she published in prose and verse warm praises of the conduct of Mr. Sheridan, the manager. With these Mr. Sheridan was so much pleased that he at once sought the acquaintance of his young defender, and later persuaded her to become his wife. She was not only skillful with her pen, but also beautiful in person and charming in manner, much admired by Dr. Johnson and by the great novelist Samuel Richardson. The latter, indeed, encouraged her to attempt a novel, *The Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph.* This was published in 1761 under Richardson's patronage, and dedicated to him in affectionate terms. At once it "took the town," and within three months passed into a second edition. It was highly praised by Dr. Johnson; was enthusiastically pronounced by Charles Fox the best novel of the age; it was circulated on the Continent, translated into French, and put with success upon the stage in Paris. Stimulated by this triumph, Mrs. Sheridan composed the following year (1762) a comedy, *The Discovery*, which Garrick accepted and produced with great applause at the Drury Lane Theatre. A second comedy, *The Dupe*, proved less fortunate, for it was much inferior in quality, and upon its presentation utterly failed. A third comedy, *A Journey to Bath*, though in parts clever, was refused by Garrick, and never came to the stage. Other literary labors were cut short by her untimely death in 1766 at the age of forty-two.

Of such parents Richard Brinsley Sheridan was born in

Dublin in the fall of 1751.[1] He received his early education from his father, and from a private school taught by a near relative. At the age of eight, however, he went to live in England, whither his parents, driven by pecuniary distress, had preceded him. At eleven he was sent to the fashionable school of Harrow, where he lived seven years, a clever boy, but a poor student. During his residence here he lost his mother, of whom, unfortunately, he had seen very little. At the age of seventeen he left Harrow; and his father being unable to send him to the university, he came to London, and spent the next two years under the paternal roof, studying oratory with his father, and Latin and fencing with private instructors.

Birth and early training

Two years later the family moved to Bath, the fashionable health-resort and watering-place, then far more famous than now as a city of pleasure. It was crowded with people of wealth and fashion, and haunted by adventurers and sharpers.

At Bath

> Of all the gay places the world can afford,
> By gentle and simple for pastime ador'd,
> Fine balls, and fine concerts, fine buildings, and springs,
> Fine walks, and fine views, and a thousand fine things,
> (Not to mention the sweet situation and air)
> What place, my dear mother, with Bath can compare? [2]

Indeed, as a capital of fashion, health, and pleasure, eighteenth-century Bath was without a rival. In the midst of its varied life the young Sheridan moved, observing many queer types of humanity, noting in their talk and manners much that was ludicrous, and with his keen eye and retentive memory storing up material for future plays.

As he approached his majority he began to think of a life calling. All his inclination was towards authorship. At Harrow he had begun a play founded on *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and had composed a long essay on versification. With Halhed, an old Harrow school

Literary projects

[1] "The precise day, and, indeed, month of Sheridan's birth is unascertained." (Sichel, *Sheridan*, I, 253.)

[2] *The New Bath Guide*, 1766.

chum who had proceeded to Oxford, he now began to collaborate on a farce, *Jupiter* (completed, but never acted), and on a translation from the Greek of the love epistles of Aristænetus (completed and published, but without pecuniary returns). Moreover he came near launching a weekly periodical in the style of *The Spectator*. He had fixed upon a name, *Hernan's Miscellany*, had prepared some manuscript for the first issue, and had secured a willing printer; but suddenly, for reasons now unknown, he gave up the plan. His head teemed with many other literary projects.

Courtship and marriage

Yet the young would-be author found time for a romantic courtship and marriage. The Sheridans became intimate at Bath with the family of Mr. Thomas Linley, a fashionable teacher of music, noted both as a player on the harpsichord and as a composer. His son, Tom (declared by Mozart to be a prodigy), and his daughters, Elizabeth and Mary, were so excellently gifted in music, and so well trained, that Dr. Burney called their home "a nest of nightingales." The elder daughter, Miss Elizabeth Linley, frequently appeared in public oratorios at Bath, Oxford, London, and elsewhere. Her beauty, her modesty, and her "divinely sweet voice" captivated all hearts. Halhed, after hearing her sing at Oxford, wrote: "I am petrified; my very faculties are annihilated with wonder. My conception could not form such a power of voice — such a melody — such a soft yet so audible a tone!" Not only, however, was Miss Linley a "mistress of harmony"; her beauty of character was equally charming. Sheridan wrote of her: —

> So well her mind and voice agree
> That every thought is melody.

After her first public singing in London, the novelist Frances Burney wrote in her diary: "The whole town seems distracted about her. Every other diversion is forsaken. Miss Linley alone engrosses all eyes, ears, hearts." She was generally acclaimed the belle of the day, and was literally besieged by suitors. She was the subject of a comedy by Foote, *The Maid of Bath* (1771); was painted by

Sir Joshua Reynolds as St. Cecilia; was ranked by Horace Walpole "above all beauties of her day"; and was admired by the King, who declared that "he never in his life heard so fine a voice." Miss Linley was as romantic as she was beautiful. In 1772, in order to escape from an obnoxious suitor, and to avoid singing in public oratorios, she planned to run away and take refuge in a French convent. Sheridan's sisters were let into the plot, and then Sheridan himself. Like the knight in romance, he volunteered to act as her escort thither. One rainy night the two escaped, and after a stormy voyage across the Channel, reached Calais in safety. Sheridan, who had long worshiped Miss Linley in silence, now urged his suit so eloquently that she consented to a secret marriage. Immediately after the ceremony she entered a convent in Lille, where she intended to remain until he came of age, or was able to support a wife. Soon, however, Mr. Linley appeared and conducted the young persons back to England. In consequence of the escapade Sheridan fought two duels with the disappointed suitor, and the whole incident became a matter of notoriety. After a year of secret courtship (for the ceremony in France was not binding) Sheridan and Miss Linley were formally united according to the rites of the Church of England, and began housekeeping in a modest cottage at East Burnham.

Sheridan, now face to face with the problem of supporting a household, began to work in earnest. On November 17, 1774, he wrote to his father-in-law: "There will be a comedy of mine in rehearsal at Covent Garden [Theatre] within a few days. I did not set to work on it till within a few days of my setting out for Crome, so you may think I have not for these last six weeks been very idle." This play was *The Rivals*. On January 17, 1775, with high expectations on the part of the author and of the management, it was presented to the public at the Covent Garden Theatre.

Composes The Rivals

But the play proved a failure. It showed clearly the inexperience of the author, it was too long by nearly an hour, it was badly performed, and, in particular, the character of Sir Lucius O'Trigger was so wretch-

First night's failure

edly acted as to call forth general disapproval. Sheridan withdrew the play at once, and set to work revising it. *The Morning Post*, on January 19, 1775, announced: "The Comedy of the *Rivals* at *Covent Garden*, is withdrawn for the present to undergo some severe prunings, trimmings, and patchings, before its second appearance: the Author, we are informed, seeing the general disapprobation with which it was received, was very desirous of withdrawing it entirely, but the managers would not consent to it, determined to stand the event of a second embarcation, let the consequences be what they may."

Second performance successful

Ten days later *The Rivals* was for a second time offered to the public. It had been thoroughly revised, much shortened, and a new actor, Clinch, had been substituted for Lee in the rôle of Sir Lucius O'Trigger. The result was a complete triumph. *The British Chronicle* records: "At the second representation of the new Comedy of the Rivals, it was received with the warmest bursts of approbation by a crowded and apparently impartial audience." [1] At once *The Rivals* became a favorite with London playgoers, and was hailed by the critics as the greatest comedy of the age.

St. Patrick's Day and The Duenna

On May 2 of the same year Sheridan produced at Covent Garden a short farce, *St. Patrick's Day*, written for a benefit performance of the actor Clinch, who, after Lee had so signally failed in the part of Sir Lucius O'Trigger, had assumed the rôle with unusual success. This piece, which Sheridan wrote in forty-eight hours, does not deserve much attention from students of literature. On his next work, however, produced, in the same year, Sheridan put forth his best efforts. This was a comic opera, *The Duenna*, full of beautiful lyrics for which Mr. Linley composed the music. It was produced at Covent Garden on November 21, 1775, and at once met with rare success. During the first season it was acted no less than seventy-five times; and though nowadays it is never put on the stage, it was judged by contemporaries to be a wonderful performance. Sheridan's reputation was at

[1] Quoted from Rae, *Sheridan's Plays*, page xxvii.

last secure. The universal opinion of the public, as well as of the critics, was expressed by Dr. Johnson when he said, in proposing Sheridan for membership in the famous Literary Club, "He who has written the two best comedies of his age [*The Rivals* and *The Duenna*] is surely a considerable man."

In June, 1776, Garrick retired from the managership of the Drury Lane Theatre. Sheridan, Mr. Linley, and a friend, Dr. Ford, bought Garrick's half-interest in the theatre, and Sheridan, aged twenty-five, was given the important post of manager. This position he retained, with varying degrees of success virtually throughout the rest of his life.

Manager of Drury Lane

The public awaited with high expectations the next play from the hands of the new manager. After a considerable delay this came on May 8, 1777, as *The School for Scandal*. It more than filled the expectations of the audience, and added greatly to the reputation of its author.[1] It is a better play than *The Rivals*, and stands without dispute as Sheridan's masterpiece. Even to-day it maintains its popularity with playgoers, and holds a prominent place among the stock-comedies of our stage.

The School for Scandal

On October 30, 1779, Sheridan produced *The Critic*, a comedy modeled on the Duke of Buckingham's *Rehearsal*. It is clever throughout, and though now rarely acted, was at the time a notable success. It deserves to rank next to *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal* as Sheridan's best work.

The Critic

Sheridan, though still in his twenties, had shown himself to be the greatest playwright of the age. He was the son of an actor, was the manager of the Drury Lane Theatre, and was a large shareholder in its patent. Everything seemed to mark out for him a brilliant career as a dramatist. Suddenly, however, he abandoned this promising career. He had written his last original play, and though he continued to be manager of Drury Lane, he turned all his energies to politics. In 1780 he secured a seat in Parliament. Eleven days later he made

Abandons play-writing for politics

[1] Read the "Contemporary Comment," pages xxxi–xxxiv.

his first speech, and revealed his powers of oratory. Two months later he was elected a member of Brooks's Club, the most powerful and exclusive political club of the day, at whose meetings the leaders of the Whig Party decided affairs of state. Two years later he was given the important office of Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs. His career in politics does not here interest us in its minute details; suffice it to say that for a quarter of a century he was one of the most conspicuous figures in Parliament, and one of its most brilliant orators, sharing fame with Charles Fox, William Pitt, the younger, and Edmund Burke.[1]

Power as an orator.

The climax of his career was marked by his two brilliant orations against Warren Hastings. Their effect may be illustrated by a quotation from Sir Gilbert Elliot, first Earl of Minto, at the time a member of Parliament. After hearing Sheridan's speech he wrote to his wife: "This last night, though the House was up soon after one, and I was in bed before two, I have not slept *one wink*. Nothing whatever was the matter with me, except the impression of what had been passing still vibrating on my brain. . . . Sheridan opened his charge, and spoke exactly five hours and a half, with such fluency and rapidity that I think his speech could not be read in double the time. You may imagine the quantity of matter it contained. It was by many degrees the most excellent and astonishing performance I ever heard, and surpasses all I ever imagined possible in eloquence and ability. This is the *universal* sense of all who heard it. You will conceive how admirable it was when I tell you that he surpassed, I think, Pitt, Fox, and even Burke, in his finest and most brilliant orations. . . . It is impossible to describe the feelings he excited. The *bone* rose repeatedly in my throat, and tears in my eyes — not of grief, but merely of strongly excited sensibility; so they were in Dudley Long's, who is not, I should think, particularly tearful. The conclusion, in which the whole force of the case was collected, and where his whole powers were employed to their utmost stretch, and indeed his own feelings wound to the utmost pitch, worked the House up

[1] Cf. Byron's *Monody* quoted on page xv.

into such a paroxysm of passionate enthusiasm on the subject, and of admiration for him, that the moment he sat down there was a universal shout, nay, even clapping, for half-a-second; every man was on the floor, and all his friends throwing themselves on his neck in raptures of joy and exultation. This account is not at all exaggerated, and hardly does justice to, I daresay, the most remarkable scene ever exhibited, either there or in any other popular assembly." [1] That Sir Gilbert did not exaggerate we have ample evidence. Burke declared that the speech was "the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument, and wit united, of which there was any record or tradition"; Pitt wrote that it was "without exception one of the most wonderful performances I ever heard, and almost the greatest imaginable exertion of the human mind"; and Fox, with characteristic enthusiasm, asserted that "all that he had ever heard, all that he had ever read, when compared with it, dwindled into nothing, and vanished like vapour before the sun." Parliament voted to adjourn until the next day, for the avowed reason that its members could not fairly and dispassionately vote on the question while under the spell of the oration. Yet when Sheridan's speeches are read nowadays they are strangely disappointing, and when compared with the speeches of Burke they seem pale and ineffectual. Accordingly Mr. Saintsbury has referred to his oratory as "theatrical and rather brassy." It cannot be denied, however, that Sheridan exercised over his hearers a power of oratory unsurpassed in the records of Parliament.

The Strangers and Pizarro

Naturally Sheridan's intense interest in politics led to his neglect of Drury Lane. In fact, the only thing that saved his management from disaster was the brilliant group of actors he had got together. Finally, to retrieve the finances of the theatre after a series of misfortunes, he turned his hand again to the playwright's art. This time he contented himself with adapting from the German two comedies of Kotzebue, *The Strangers* (1798) and *Pizarro* (1799). Though adapta-

[1] From *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot, first Earl of Minto*, I, 123–24. Quoted in Rae, *Life*, II, 60.

tions, and consequently not to be reckoned in his list of original works, these plays showed clearly that he had lost none of his skill as a dramatist. They created a sensation among the playgoers, and for the time replenished the empty coffers of the theatre.

Last years

The last years of Sheridan's life were clouded in domestic, political, and pecuniary troubles. He lost his wife, and married again somewhat unhappily; he watched his beloved son Tom yield slowly to the ravages of consumption; he himself suffered continuously from a painful disorder. In politics he formed a baleful friendship with the unworthy Prince of Wales; his party was out of power; and his alliances within the party were unfortunate. In his pecuniary affairs he became involved in difficulties that led to his ultimate ruin. In 1791 Drury Lane Theatre was condemned as unsafe, and had to be reconstructed at a heavy expense. In 1809 it was totally destroyed by fire, and with it a large part of Sheridan's fortune. When the theatre was rebuilt, new officials assumed charge, and Sheridan was forced out. Moreover, the sum of money due him for his share was wrongfully withheld. By 1812 Sheridan's affairs were in so bad a state that he could not pay the expenses of a re-election to Parliament. In 1813 he was actually arrested for debt, and for a short time confined in a sponging-house. His career was now over. Shut out from the theatre and from politics, besieged by creditors, harassed by domestic sorrows, and in ruined health, he dragged his life to an unhappy end. Even as he lay dying, a sheriff with a writ of debt took up lodging in the house.[1] He passed away quietly on July 7, 1816, at the age of sixty-five. His funeral was attended with magnificent pomp, and he was laid with honor in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

[1] Only a few days before his death, Sheridan wrote thus to Mr. Rogers: "I am absolutely undone and broken-hearted. They are going to put the carpets out of window, and break into Mrs. S.'s room and *take me*: 150*l.* will remove all difficulty. For God's sake let me see you!" Moore was the immediate bearer of the required sum.

From the shore of Lake Geneva Byron wrote:[1] —

A mighty Spirit is eclipsed — a Power
Hath passed from day to darkness — to whose hour
Of light no likeness is bequeathed — no name,
Focus at once of all the rays of Fame!
The flash of Wit — the bright Intelligence,
The beam of Song — the blaze of Eloquence,
Set with their Sun, but still have left behind
The enduring produce of immortal Mind.
. . . . . .
Ye Orators! whom yet our councils yield,
Mourn for the veteran Hero of your field!
The worthy rival of the wondrous *Three*,[2]
Whose words were sparks of Immortality!
Ye Bards! to whom the Drama's Muse is dear,
He was your Master — emulate him *here!*
Ye men of wit and social eloquence!
He was your brother — bear his ashes hence!
While Powers of mind almost of boundless range,
Complete in kind — as various in their change,
While Eloquence — Wit — Poesy — and Mirth,
That humbler Harmonist of care on Earth,
Survive within our souls — while lives our sense
Of pride in Merit's proud pre-eminence,
Long shall we seek his likeness — long in vain,
And turn to all of him which may remain,
Sighing that Nature form'd but one such man,
And broke the die — in moulding Sheridan.

CHIEF PRODUCTIONS OF SHERIDAN THE DRAMATIST

The Rivals (comedy); produced at Covent Garden Theatre, January 17, 1775.
Revised production: January 28, 1775.

St. Patrick's Day; or, The Scheming Lieutenant (farce); produced at Covent Garden Theatre, May 2, 1775.

The Duenna (comic opera); produced at Covent Garden Theatre, November 21, 1775.

A Trip to Scarborough (comedy adapted from Vanbrugh's *The Relapse;* or *Virtue in Danger*); produced at Drury Lane Theatre, February 24, 1777.

[1] "Monody on the Death of The Right Hon. R. B. Sheridan: Spoken at Drury-Lane Theatre." This was written at Diodati on July 17, 1816, at the request of Mr. Douglas Kinnaird. "I did as well as I could," says Lord Byron, "but where I have not my choice, I pretend to answer for nothing." (Letter to Murray, September 29, 1816.)

[2] the wondrous *Three!* Fox — Pitt — Burke.

The School for Scandal (comedy); produced at Drury Lane Theatre, May 8, 1777.

The Critic; or a Tragedy Rehearsed (burlesque farce); produced at Drury Lane Theatre, October 30, 1779.

Pizarro (melodramatic tragedy adapted from Kotzebue's *Spaniards in Spain*); produced at Drury Lane Theatre, May 24, 1799.

II

ENGLISH SENTIMENTAL COMEDY FROM CIBBER TO SHERIDAN[1]

Sentimentalism was an attitude towards life. To try to pick out from amidst the mystifying interplay of cause and effect those particular causes which determined an attitude towards life, is always presumptuous. Yet, risking presumption, we may say that sentimentalism developed largely because of a growing antagonism to two theories that had come down from medieval times: (1) the divine right of kings — and, by corollary, the divine plan and divine sanction of an aristocratic organization of society; (2) the theory that man is essentially and innately bad.

In the eighteenth century the first theory was definitely discarded and the second most vigorously attacked. The sentimentalist's attitude was determined by the belief — expressed or implicit — that (1) "all men are created free and equal"; differences in social position being accidental and artificial; and (2) man is essentially good, evil resulting not from man's innate waywardness but from the very organization of society. In the eighteenth century, therefore, man as *man*, — the ordinary human being, the peasant, the *bourgeois*, — attained a respect, a very glorification, and therefore a sympathy, unknown before. Hence the popularity in the eighteenth century of, first, the sentimental drama and, later, the sentimental novel.

To understand the history of sentimental comedy and to appreciate the great change in dramatic ideals effected by this new *genre*, we should be acquainted with the three

[1] For the historical facts and many of the statements of opinion in this section, the editor has followed Professor Ernest Bernbaum's *The Drama of Sensibility, a sketch of the history of English Sentimental Comedy and Domestic Tragedy, 1696–1780.*

principal types, contrasting with, and antedating it. These are: (1) romantic comedy, (2) tragedy, (3) the comedy of manners.

(1) *Romantic comedy* (*and pastoral drama*). In these, the natural laws of cause and effect were unknown. In an artificial environment, wholly exotic to human experience, ideally virtuous persons lived and moved. This type of drama presented a world farthest removed from that of the ordinary man; by its very effort to escape the commonplace, it was least sympathetic with him and his problems. The poetic art of the author alone won for his characters the interest of the audience.

Types of eighteenth-century drama

(2) *Classic tragedy*. In this field, dramatists followed the classic dictum that tragedy concern itself only with princes or persons of eminent rank. To classic dramatists, the misfortunes of the middle class were pathetic, not tragic, and therefore not a fit subject for their art.[1]

(3) *Comedy of manners* (*laughing or true comedy*). This form might deal with everyday men and women; but only to show the worldliness of society, to tear the mask from respectability, to expose folly and vice. Its object was to hold up human frailty to scorn by presenting its characters in predicaments more or less distressing — predicaments for which they were to blame. Human nature was essentially bad; man was to be scorned. Therefore, comedy should be satiric and contemptuous; in it was no place for anything pathetic, no appeal to the sympathies.[2]

In none of these types, then, were the virtues and distresses

[1] Consult Thorndike's *Tragedy*, especially chapters VIII, "The Restoration"; IX, "The Eighteenth Century"; X, "The Romantic Movement."

[2] Specimens of this type are the plays of Wycherley (1640?–1716), Congreve (1670–1729), Vanbrugh (1664–1726), and Farquhar (1678–1707). Their coarseness and indecency drove them from the stage early in the eighteenth century; but their wit and sparkling dialogue have never been surpassed. Consult Palmer's *The Comedy of Manners, 1664–1720*, and Leigh Hunt's edition (1849) of the complete plays of the four authors named above.

Jeremy Collier (1650–1726) helped materially toward the purification of the stage through his *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1699). See Macaulay's Essay, *The Comic Dramatists of the Restoration.*

of ordinary men and women treated sympathetically. Prohibited by sundry conventions from appearing among the characters of romantic comedy or of tragedy, the man of the middle class was made the butt of ridicule in the characters of laughing comedy. This was the one way in which he was represented upon the stage — as a comic figure; and ordinary men and women began to weary of portrayals of human character so far inferior to its best possibilities.

With Colley Cibber's *Love's Last Shift; or the Fool in Fashion,*[1] began a tendency in a new direction. This play was the first "sentimental comedy." It aimed to appeal directly to the fellow-feeling of the audience, through a sympathetic portrayal of the virtues and distresses of beings like themselves. Its spirit was as far removed as possible from that of the laughing comedy with its ridicule of human folly. It sought to present characters that the audience should emulate. As a rejoinder, Vanbrugh, in *The Relapse; or Virtue in Danger,*[2] presented from the comic point of view the scrupulous morality, the power of virtue, and the appeal to pity portrayed in Cibber's piece; and thereafter the contest between the two types of comedy was actively waged.

The most important new comedies played between 1698 and 1702 were Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700), far removed from the sentimental; Farquhar's *The Constant Couple* (1699), in which there is some tendency toward the sentimental; and the same author's *The Twin Rivals* (1702), with marked sentimental treatment of plot and character. In 1703, Steele wrote his first sentimental comedy, *The Lying Lover,*[3] most of whose personages are modeled upon characters in the plays of Cibber and Farquhar.

A growing tendency toward sentimental comedy

The early sentimental comedies, with the exception of

[1] Its initial performance was in January, 1696.

[2] This play was adapted by Sheridan and produced, under the title *A Trip to Scarborough*, in 1777.

[3] Steele soon turned to another field of literature, starting his magazine *The Tatler* in 1709 and following it with *The Spectator* in 1711. But in 1722 he reverted to sentimental comedy and produced *The Conscious Lovers.* This was his last piece of writing.

Cibber's *Love's Last Shift*, had been practically failures; and the future of the type was doubtful when, late in 1704, Cibber staged *The Careless Husband*. This established the permanent popularity of the *genre* which, during the next five years, held its own with the older type; four sentimental comedies being produced and the same number of true comedies. Again Cibber made the greatest contribution to the cause, his *The Lady's Last Stake; or the Wife's Resentment* (1707), which remained a favorite through a half-century.

Such were the beginnings of English sentimental comedy. Says Professor Bernbaum: "Though Cibber, Farquhar, and Steele worked somewhat blindly, these founders of the school of sentimental comedy accomplished between 1696 and 1704 work of lasting importance. They destroyed forever the tradition that the pathetic must be confined to romantic drama. They created several characters which were in the future to be copied, with slight variations, again and again — the sorely-tried but loyal wife, the maiden faithful to her absent lover, the pitiable forsaken mistress finally restored to respect, the repentant young prodigal, the nobly generous friend, and the wayward but reclaimable husband. They made these characters utter virtuous sentiments that uplifted the hearts of their audiences with admiration, and they placed them in emotional situations that evoked the tribute of tears. They opened the doors of a new world, which professed to be an image of the real one, but in which pity and love and virtue dwelt supreme."

Significance of the movement

It would be hardly satisfactory in brief space to trace the slight progress of this type of comedy during the next twenty years or its subsequent loss of prestige; instead, the student is referred to Professor Bernbaum's *The Drama of Sensibility*. But we should mention in partial explanation that sentimentalism was now passing into other branches of literature. Thomson's poem, *The Seasons*, Akenside's *Pleasures of the Imagination*, and the novels of Samuel Richardson may be cited as evidence. We should note also that the functions of the stage as an organ of public opinion were being usurped by the news-

Sentimentalism in other forms of literature

papers and periodical magazines — more or less on the lines of the *Spectator* — which, springing up by hundreds, were reflecting the life of the times more perfectly than was the stage.[1]

These were the competitors of comedy for public interest. It is significant also that tragedy, like comedy, was declining in power. Dramatists tended to use over and over again the stock characters of the theatre, and also were influenced by the movement, originating in France, for great regularity in the structure of plays. "The old exuberant passion of Shakespeare," writes Professor Dickinson,[2] "was displaced by the formalism of Voltaire. Addison's *Cato* (1713) had been built on the regular lines of French tragedy three decades later, Johnson essayed classical tragedy in *Irene* (1749). The success of the first was more hurtful to English drama than the failure of the latter. English tragedy has never recovered from the debilitating influence of French 'regularity.' '*Barbarossa* I have read, but I did not cry; at a modern tragedy it is sufficient not to laugh,' writes Gray to Thomas Wharton in 1754 concerning a tragedy by Dr. Brown, a friend of Warburton.[3]

Decline in power of the stage

Formalism in tragedy

"For half a century, to use the phrase of Dr. Johnson, 'declamation roared whilst passion slept.' In 1757, Home, the author of *Douglas*, was hailed as Shakespeare redivivus, but his was but a spark of the divine fire. The most lamentable sign of the dramatic decadence of the times was the contempt into which Shakespeare had fallen. Garrick, whose *métier* it was, as Mrs. Parsons has said, to fake, not emulate Shakespeare, 'corrected' *Romeo and Juliet*, made a pantomime of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, introduced topical songs into *A Winter's Tale*, and ended with *Hamlet with alterations*.

[1] Hazlitt's phrase seems justified: he called the plays of the day "do-me-good, lack-a-daisical, whining, make-believe comedies." *English Comic Writers*, Lecture IV.

[2] In his Introduction to the Plays of Oliver Goldsmith, R.L.S. 181, 182.

[3] Compare the anecdote about Sheridan at Cumberland's *The Battle of Hastings*, page xxix.

"In lighter amusement, the eighteenth century had seen the introduction of opera and of farce, both from France. The success of Gay's *Beggar's Opera* (1728) has perhaps never been duplicated. It was followed by a flood of operas of all kinds. Indeed, so popular did spectacular and lyrical effects become that no play, serious or comic, was complete without songs. Samuel Foote and David Garrick were the most successful authors of that comedy of incident and character now known as farce."

The introduction of opera and farce

A revival of English sentimental comedy began in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The play which initiated it was *The School for Lovers* (1762), by George Whitehead, who, by further coincidence, had succeeded Colley Cibber as poet laureate. Mrs. Frances Sheridan [1] the next year produced an even more successful play, *The Discovery*. And thereafter, in spite of the gibes of Samuel Foote, the sentimental comedy under the leadership of Isaac Bickerstaff, Hugh Kelly, Richard Cumberland,[2] and others, regained its vogue. Even Colman and Garrick, playwrights at first disinclined to sentimentalism, yielded to the popular taste, and wrote plays

The revival of sentimental comedy

[1] Mother of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. She wrote also *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (a novel) and *A Journey to Bath* (a comedy).

[2] Cumberland's best play is *The West Indian*. In the poem, "Retaliation," Goldsmith thus characterizes him as a playwright: —

> Here Cumberland lies, having acted his parts,
> The Terence of England, the mender of hearts;
> A flattering painter, who made it his care
> To draw men as they ought to be, not as they are.
> His gallants are all faultless, his women divine,
> And comedy wonders at being so fine;
> Like a tragedy queen he has dizen'd her out,
> Or rather like tragedy giving a rout.
> His fools have their follies so lost in a crowd
> Of virtues and feelings, that folly grows proud;
> And coxcombs, alike in their failings alone,
> Adopting his portraits, are pleas'd with their own.
> Say, where has our poet this malady caught,
> Or wherefore his characters thus without fault?
> Say, was it that vainly directing his view
> To find out men's virtues, and finding them few,
> Quite sick of pursuing each troublesome elf,
> He grew lazy at last, and drew from himself?

Sheridan lampooned him in the character of Sir Fretful Plagiary in *The Critic*.

in the prevailing mode. "It was to combat this tendency," to quote Professor Dickinson further, "that Goldsmith essayed a combination of the farce of his contemporary, Foote, with the comedy of Farquhar and Congreve. Samuel Foote's plays had always been as far as possible from the sentimental order. On February 15, 1773, before the production of *She Stoops to Conquer*, Foote had brought out at the Haymarket *The Handsome Housemaid; or Piety in Pattens*, 'how a maiden of low degree, by the mere effects of morality and virtue, raised herself [like Pamela in Richardson's novel] to riches and honors.' This was a burlesque entertainment especially directed against sentimental drama, and hailed later as a 'keen satire on the drowsy spirit of our modern comedies.'

"In spite of the fact that isolated pens had been turned against the follies of the sentimental school of playwriting, it was not until Goldsmith formulated the attack through his criticism and followed it up in his plays that anything was accomplished. Goldsmith's bent was not toward tragedy, and in comedy was all away from the comic types of the times and toward the writers of the age of Farquhar and Congreve. Discarding the well-known theatrical types of his contemporaries, he quite consistently went to nature for his models of men and women. All Goldsmith added to nature was the piquant sauce of his own jesting spirit. To 'exaggerate the features of folly to render it more thoroughly ridiculous,' was his principle of comic satire. In this he was more like Farquhar than like Congreve or Steele, having little of Congreve's brilliancy, and nothing of the latter author's finely tempered humor.

Goldsmith's theories of dramatic art

Goldsmith's principle of comic satire

"Of course, Goldsmith's practice of his principles aroused immediately accusations of vulgarity and irreverence. Against these charges Goldsmith had long before prepared his answer. 'Does the poet paint the absurdities of the vulgar, then he is low: does he exaggerate the features of folly to render it more thoroughly ridiculous, he is then very low,' he writes.[1] And in his dedication to Johnson he con-

[1] In *The Present State of Polite Learning.*

tends, 'The greatest wit may be found in a character, without impairing the most unaffected piety.' Again,[1] he ridicules the 'good, instructive, moral sermons,' the modern tragedies, and defends his position by saying, 'All the other comic writers of antiquity aim only at rendering folly or vice ridiculous, but never exalt their characters into buskin'd pomp or make what Voltaire humorously calls a tradesman's tragedy.'"[2]

The Good-Natured Man

The Good-Natured Man was first played January 29, 1768. Its chances of success were discounted by the fact that it was a play in a new vein, with which some of the actors were not in sympathy, and especially by the appearance at Drury Lane just six nights earlier of *False Delicacy*, a sentimental comedy by Hugh Kelly. This was mawkish and inadequate, but nevertheless exactly the sort of play the audience wanted. *The Good-Natured Man* proved unable to compete with it, and was withdrawn after nine nights. Of this play, however, Dr. Johnson said, "It is the best comedy that has appeared since *The Provoked Husband*."[3] Austin Dobson is of the opinion that if it "had appeared at a later date, it would have been received with more enthusiasm."

She Stoops to Conquer

Goldsmith's second play, *She Stoops to Conquer*, was first played March 15, 1773. Sentimental comedy had in the mean while received a setback in the failure of *A Word to the Wise*, another play by Kelly, and in the increase in ridicule by critics and reviewers.[4] Goldsmith's play won immediate success. Such hostile criticism as was voiced may be represented by Horace Walpole's

[1] In *A Comparison between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy*. See Appendix.

[2] Against the latter remark Cumberland came forth with a strong rejoinder prefacing his next comedy, *The Choleric Man* (1775).

[3] This was the title given by Cibber to a play begun by Vanbrugh (*A Journey to London*), which the latter did not live to finish. Cibber prepared the manuscript for the stage, and took many liberties with the original author's style; thus having revenge for Vanbrugh's *The Relapse*. *The Provoked Husband* was produced in 1728 and scored an even greater success than Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (1722). It remained a popular play for nearly a century; with it Cibber's career as a sentimental dramatist closed.

[4] Goldsmith's own essay had been printed in *The Westminster Review* for December, 1772.

rather severe stricture: "Dr. Goldsmith has written a comedy — no, it is the lowest of all farces. It is not the subject I condemn, though very vulgar, but the execution. The drift tends to no moral, no edification of any kind. The situations, however, are well imagined, and make one laugh in spite of the grossness of the dialogue, the forced witticisms, and total improbability of the whole plan and conduct. But what disgusts me most is, that though the characters are very low, and aim at low humor, not one of them says a sentence that is natural or marks any character at all." But Dr. Johnson, whose opinion was far more weighty, expressed himself thus: "I know of no comedy for many years that has so much exhilarated an audience; that has answered so much the great aim of comedy, making an audience merry."

She Stoops to Conquer was a telling blow against sentimental comedy. Following Goldsmith, the next dramatist of note was Richard Brinsley Sheridan. He, as Professor Bernbaum says, was "no thoroughgoing opponent of sentimentalism." In *The Rivals*, which is for the most part a laughing comedy, there is yet the sub-plot of Faulkland and Julia and their courtship. *The Town and Country Magazine* for January, 1775, calls these characters "the most *outre* sentimental ones that ever appeared upon the stage." That Sheridan was believed to have intended some concession to the sentimentalists is indicated by testimony from Bernard, an actor, who witnessed the initial performance of *The Rivals*. Some years later, he wrote: "It must be remembered that this was the English 'age of sentiment,' and Kelly and Cumberland had flooded the stage with moral poems under the title of comedies, which took their views of life from the drawing-room exclusively, and colored their characters with a nauseous French affectation. *The Rivals* was an attempt to overthrow this taste, and to follow up the blow which Goldsmith had given in *She Stoops to Conquer*. My recollection of the manner in which the former [*The Rivals*] was received, bears me out in the supposition. The audience on this occasion were composed of two parties — those who supported the prevailing taste, and those who were indifferent to it and liked

Sheridan's The Rivals

nature. The consequence was that Faulkland and Julia (which Sheridan had obviously introduced to conciliate the sentimentalists) were the characters which were the most favorably received." [1]

Several recent critics have held the interesting view that this sub-plot is really intended as a satire upon sentimentalism; and Professor Nettleton [2] suggests that it is far more than offset by the attack on sentimentality in the novel in "the prominence of Lydia Languish, who sighs over the sentimental novels of the circulating library, and weeps over the prospect of a humdrum wedding in lieu of 'one of the most sentimental elopements.'" It is also held that Sheridan's intent as a dramatist toward the prevailing moral-lachrymose comedy is plainly avowed in his prologue spoken on the tenth night (after his revision of *The Rivals*[3]), for he there ridicules

Varying views

> "The goddess of the woful countenance —
> The sentimental Muse."

Sheridan's practice would have been more consistent with his avowal, if, in his next play, he had not again had recourse to the favorite themes of the sentimentalist,[4] and if he had not — once more to quote Professor Bernbaum — there used plots which "have the motivation and dénouements of sentimental comedy."

But, in *The School for Scandal*, this evidence of the influence of sentimentalism is, after all, a superficial matter. It concerns the manner of the play more than its purpose.[5] At heart, Sheridan had no patience

The School for Scandal

[1] Quoted in Fitzgerald's *The Lives of the Sheridans*, I, 119–20.

[2] In his Introduction to *The Major Dramas of Richard Brinsley Sheridan*.

[3] Upon the revised play, *The British Chronicle* (January 27–30, 1775) made this comment: "*The Rivals* will now stand its ground; and although we cannot pronounce it, with all its amendments, a *comic chef-d'œuvre*, it certainly encourages us to hope for a very capital play from the same writer at a future season; he therefore from motives of candor and encouragement, is entitled to the patronage and favor of a generous public."

[4] Compare Sichel's views, page xlv.

[5] In its own day, the play was received as "an attempt to destroy the taste for sentimental comedy revived by Mr. Cumberland." See page xxxiv.

with the cant and hypocrisy which flavored so much of what the "man of sentiment" said and did. Every allusion to "sentiment" is sarcastic. This biting satire is far more significant than Sheridan's use of the stock characters and themes of the sentimental playwrights.

In manner, then, while Sheridan's two great comedies were not an attempt to write without a touch of sentimentalism, in intent they were both reactionary from that school. Convictions, hitherto curbed by convention, are given free rein in the last of Sheridan's original dramatic pieces. In *The Critic* (produced October 30, 1779), unhampered by the necessity for developing either characters or plot, Sheridan shows even more clearly his own feeling as to sentimental comedy.[1] In the opening scene he ridicules it unsparingly. Here Dangle, reading the manuscript of a play brought him by Sneer, bursts into tears and exclaims, "What, is this a tragedy?" This conversation ensues: —

The Critic

"*Sneer.* No, that's a genteel comedy, not a translation — only taken from the French: it is written in a style which they have lately tried to run down; the true sentimental, and nothing ridiculous in it from the beginning to the end.

"*Mrs. Dangle.* Well, if they had kept to that, I should not have been such an enemy to the stage; there was some edification to be got from those pieces, Mr. Sneer!

"*Sneer.* I am quite of your opinion, Mrs. Dangle: the theatre, in proper hands, might certainly be made the school of morality; but now, I am sorry to say it, people seem to go there principally for their entertainment!

"*Mrs. Dangle.* It would have been more to the credit of the managers to have kept it in the other line.

"*Sneer.* Undoubtedly, madam; and hereafter perhaps to have had it recorded, that in the midst of a luxurious and dissipated age, they preserved two houses in the capital, where the conversation was always moral at least, if not entertaining!"

The tendency, therefore, of Sheridan's major dramas is progressively against sentimentalism; for in *The Rivals*

[1] It is recognized, of course, that the main satire of *The Critic* is upon the bombastic tragedy of the day.

there is a true sentimental sub-plot; in *The School for Scandal*, a satire against the materials of the sentimentalists which outweighs Sheridan's own use of these materials; while in *The Critic* in pursuance of his object "to ridicule the false taste and the follies of modern dramatic composition," [1] Sheridan derides the absurd affectation into which the sentimentalists had fallen.

Summary of Sheridan's attitude toward sentimental comedy

III

THE EVOLUTION OF THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

Long before Sheridan sought "Scandal in his den," he had had experience of the creature's venom. Lacking the fashionable journals of Bath, and their varying scandal, it is probable that Sheridan's two duels might have been avoided. This seems to have come home to him while he was recovering from the wounds received during the second of these mêlées. Thereupon, he wrote his *Ode to Scandal*,[2] a very slight foreshadowing of his great comedy.

Ode to Scandal

The first rough draft of the play itself is a sheet of dialogue for *The Slanderers — a Pump-Room Scene*. This was laid in Bath, and contains the germ of some of the gossip later developed in the *School for Scandal*. Perhaps simultaneously, Sheridan worked on short scenes for two other plays, "one," says Sichel, "satirizing an ill-assorted match, the other a melodramatic comedy of jealousy and intrigue." The first is notable as a rough sketch for the Teazles, though it furnished others of the principal characters later worked out in *The School for Scandal*. The second is the real nucleus of this drama, and the embryo of many of its epigrams. It is known as the "Clerimont" fragment, from the name of its principal character[3] (the precursor of Joseph Surface), and introduces other characters which

The Slanderers

The "Clerimont" fragment

[1] *The Public Advertiser*, November 1, 1779. Cited by Professor Nettleton.

[2] This is reprinted in Sichel's *Sheridan*.

[3] The name Clerimont appears in Steele's *The Tender Husband* and in Cibber's *The Double Gallant*. In discarding it, Sheridan evidenced a desire not to be accused of borrowing from the sentimentalists.

figure in the full-fledged play. Their names, however, were for the most part, not those finally selected by Sheridan; the contrasted brothers, for example, being successively the "Plausibles," the "Pliants," and the "Pliables"; the name "Surface" came from an unfinished play by Sheridan's mother, *A Journey to Bath*. Professor Brander Matthews notes that there the character, an innkeeper, is "a scandal-monger who hates scandal." In *The School for Scandal*, it was at first the younger brother who played the hypocrite.

With the fusion of these two fragments, the evolution of *The School for Scandal* made marked progress. The screen scene and the auction scene were devised, the toasting song was added, and the play expanded from two acts to five. Sheridan constantly rearranged and polished his lines, altered and developed his characters, and revised his scenes. This process extended over some nineteen years,[1] as Sheridan told Wilkes the publisher; and even then, the dramatist found it impossible to satisfy himself.

Final development

There is a well-known story that even up to the time of the rehearsals, the actors were kept waiting for their parts. On the final leaf, Sheridan scrawled "Finished at last, thank God!" and the prompter added, "Amen!" Sheridan himself supervised the casting of the parts and the rehearsals. On the night preceding its first performance, petty politics nearly caused its postponement. "A city election for the office of Chamberlain was in progress," writes Sichel, "and Wilkes was the anti-ministerial candidate. He was opposed by 'vulture' Hopkins—a merchant who also lent money to minors. The Government, apprehensive that the satire on usury (in the part of Moses) might favor Wilkes, brought influence to bear, and stopped the license at the last moment. Sheridan, however, at once saw Lord Hertford, then Lord Chamberlain, who laughed at the affair and accorded the permission."

The School for Scandal was first presented at the Drury Lane Theatre on May 8, 1777. Unlike *The Rivals*, it was at once received with the greatest enthusiasm. The dramatic critics were unanimous in their approval.

First performance

[1] Compare the impression gained by one of the contemporary reviewers, page xxxiii.

Here and there a wit or a scholar, jealous or carping, proved an exception; one querulously asked, "Why don't all these people leave off talking, and let the play begin?" Another objected to one or two characters disconnected with the plot. At an early performance, a rival dramatist, Cumberland, whose tragedy, *The Battle of Hastings*, was playing without success at another theatre, whispered to his children: "There is nothing to laugh at, my little angels; keep still, you little dunces!" When this was reported to Sheridan, he remarked that "it was ungrateful of Cumberland, [illegible] have been displeased with his children for laughing [illegible] my comedy; for when I went to see his tragedy, I laughed from beginning to end."

No small part of the success of *The School for Scandal* was due to the excellent cast. Sheridan had kept each of the performers in mind during his final retouching of the play. "Amid the mortifying circumstances attendant upon growing old," wrote Charles Lamb,[1] "it was something to have seen *The School for Scandal* in its glory. . . . No piece was ever so completely cast as this *Manager's* Comedy." Walpole called the play a "marvelous resurrection of the stage" and wrote that in it "there were more parts performed admirably than I almost ever saw in any play."

The School for Scandal ran until the close of the season, some twenty nights, and was presented sixty-five times during the following season. In 1779, when it was played three times a week, the treasurer of Drury Lane noted in his records that it "damped the new pieces."

Upon other significant and interesting phases of the play's history, we may quote Sichel: —

"Even before Sheridan entered Parliament, his great comedy was complimented by becoming at once a vehicle for party satire and a target of personal abuse. In 1779, under its own name and with a mock dedication to Tickell, it was used to mock Lord North; in 1784 — an even rarer example — to deride the

Skits and parodies upon the School for Scandal

[1] In his essay *Artificial Comedy of the Last Century*. See page xxxv.

Coalition;[1] and in 1780, when Sheridan had just taken his seat for Stafford on the side of the extreme reformers, it evoked a smart lampoon entitled 'An Epistle from Joseph Surface, Esq., to Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Esq., of Great Queen Street."[2] Throughout his career Sheridan was assailed as Charles or Joseph Surface, or as both, while a piquancy was added to these assaults by the fact that he stubbornly refused to authorize any English edition of the text and only presented his friends with transcripts.[3] Two reasons seem to have prompted this action. At the outset he was keen to prevent the unauthorized performances which a printed edition would enable, while later on he could never content himself with its form, which he continued to prune and polish. The received version dates from Moore's edition of 1821 and Leigh Hunt's of 1840, both of which were based on the six Dublin editions which appeared between 1778 and 1787, and three London ones, pirated in 1788, 1797, and 1798. These editions stereotyped the style, which it is still said cannot be changed in any leading passage without spoiling the dramatic effect of the whole.

"The history of the Dublin versions and of the comedy's *début* at the Smock Alley Theatre has been left in obscurity but here contemporary newspapers assist us. A 'Dublin Letter' in the *Public Advertiser* of January 31, 1778, tells us that 'Miss Sheridan, sister of the manager of Drury Lane, being presented by her brother with a copy of *The School for Scandal*, that lady lately sold the copy to Mr. Ryder, our manager, for 100 guineas, in

The Dublin versions

[1] "The School for Scandal, A Comedy in Five Acts, As it is performed by His Majesty's Servants, etc. Never before printed. London: Printed for G. Lester, No. 46, Old Bailey." The earlier satire is: "The School for Scandal, A Comedy. London: Sold by S. Bladon, Pater-noster-row, and I. Thresher, No. 38, Manchester Square."

There was also published a parody on *The School for Scandal*, which has sometimes been mistaken for an edition of the drama itself: "The Real and Genuine School for Scandal. Written by Brinsley Sheridan, Esq. London, 1783."

[2] "London. Printed for G. Kearsley, No. 46, in Fleet Street (Price One Shilling and Six Pence)." This squib is exceedingly rare.

[3] In a letter to his second wife, he implies that he had never sanctioned an English impression.

consequence of which he brought it out last week.' The first two nights, it continued, were crowded, but on the third the throng assembled 'would have made five audiences,' and so impatient were they that they battered in the doors. A long run, it adds, was now assured, and the 'miserable prospect' of the theatre turned into a golden 'harvest.' The text then acted for the first time was presumably an undated edition by 'J. Ewing, Dublin,' published probably in 1779 or 1780, and the sole Irish issue that contains a list of *errata*. Further editions followed in 1781, 1782, 1785, 1786, and 1787, but there can be small doubt that Ewing's edition is the first imprint of the comedy."

IV

CONTEMPORARY COMMENT

The Town and Country Magazine. May, 1777

Since our last a new comedy, under the title of the SCHOOL for SCANDAL, (written by Mr. Sheridan,) has been performed several successive times at Drury-lane Theatre, with uncommon applause. [Here follows a list of the cast.]

The chief satire of this piece is pointed against hypocrisy and scandal, in which the author displays great genius, wit, and observation. His characters are finely drawn with a masterly pencil, and have strong marks of originality. [An outline of the play follows.]

Such is the outline of this excellent comedy, which is certainly the best that has appeared upon our stage since the time of Congreve and Vanbrugh. The characters, as has already been observed, are happily drawn. The satire is just and new. The situations are well conceived. In a word, we think Mr. Sheridan deserves all the praise he has received, and all the emoluments that may arise to him from this comedy, which bids fair to be as great a favourite of the town as his Duenna.

The Public Advertiser, May 9, 1777

The Persons of the Drama have all of them something particular marked in their Characters, and is admirably well sustained throughout. The Satire is forcible, and in many Places as severe as Comedy can admit of. The Situations are so powerfully conceived, that little is left for the Performers to do, in Order to produce what is called Stage Effect; and the Circumstance of the Screen and Closet in the fourth Effect, produced a Burst of Applause beyond any Thing ever heard perhaps in a Theatre. With such Support it is needless to add that the whole was received with an extravagant Warmth of Approbation, which seemed to show that a generous British Audience will still overpay the strongest efforts of Genius.

The London Chronicle, May 8–10, 1777

The School for Scandal is the production of Mr. Sheridan, and is an additional proof of that gentleman's great abilities as a dramatic writer. The object of the satire is two-fold — detraction and hypocrisy, which are the prevailing vices of the times; by the first the good are reduced to a level with the worthless, and by means of the second, the latter assume the appearance of men of virtue and sentiment. Nothing, therefore, could have been more seasonable than this comedy, which, in point of execution, is equal, if not superior, to most of the plays produced for the last twenty years. The characters are drawn with a bold pencil, and coloured with warmth and spirit. The two principals, Joseph and Charles Surface, are the Blifil and Tom Jones of the piece. . . .

The dialogue of this comedy is easy and witty. It abounds with strokes of pointed satire, and a rich vein of humour pervades the whole, rendering it equally interesting and entertaining. The fable is well conducted, and the incidents are managed with great judgment. There hardly ever was a better dramatic situation than that which occurs in the fourth act, where Sir Peter discovers Lady Teazle in Joseph Surface's study. The two characters of the brothers are finely contrasted, and those of the Scandal Club well imagined. . . .

Upon the whole, *The School for Scandal* justifies the very great and cordial reception it met with; it certainly is a good comedy, and we should not at all wonder if it becomes as great a favorite as *The Duenna*, to which it is infinitely superior in point of sense, satire, and moral.

The Town and Country Magazine, June, 1777

[A Communication to the department designated "The Man of Pleasure."]

In this age of scandal and defamation it is astonishing that the late comedy met with such uncommon success. It is true that this piece has considerable merit; there are many bold and masterly strokes in it of genuine wit and real humour; the characters are well sustained, and two of them happily contrasted; the *denument* is natural, and the catastrophe agreeable to poetical justice. These essential merits of the comedy carried it through with great applause, notwithstanding the present rapacious taste of the world for scandal. But now the run is over, and the season at an end, a few remarks upon some of the situations cannot be considered as invidious. The sham-auction is a device out of nature, and no where to be paralleled. If the author thought an auction of use to introduce a few witticisms, a real sale, that is a public one, would have answered his purpose full as well, and furnished him with more opportunities of being clever, from a diversity of characters than from one or two. The screen scene has a good effect on the one hand, but is extremely unnatural upon the falling of it, to discover the lady, stuck up like a statue, without the least motion or emotions of surprize, or fright, upon her discovery in that situation; after she had expressed so much terror and apprehension before her detection. Joseph's quitting the room upon so trifling an errand, when the lady's reputation and his own were at stake, seems forced and incredible, especially as he leaves her husband and his brother Charles in the room, whose disposition for intrigue and mischief he is well acquainted with. Some other inconsistencies might be pointed out, which probably will occur to the author in his leisure moments, when he has time to revise a piece got up in a great hurry; and we

may, therefore, expect that upon its representation again next season, a more perfect production will be offered to the public.

These hints are not thrown out with any malicious intent to depreciate the merits of the author, whose abilities the writer of this letter holds in high estimation; but to point out to him some visible defects, which his friends are either too blind to see, or too partial to intimate to him.

The Gentleman's Magazine, February, 1778

[A Communication.]

[*The School for Scandal* is] a play which is at least as defective in morality, as abundant in wit; and more dangerous to the manners of society, than it can possibly tend to promote its pleasure.

Affection of Sentiment, and love for scandal, are the foibles satirized by this comedy: the former is not a reigning vice of the times; on the contrary, a shameless depravity of disposition, which glories in the faults it commits, gains ground every day, and that unblushing impudence which formerly characterized the veteran in iniquity, may now be found in a school-boy. . . .

Lady Teazle is certainly more likely to excite imitation than disgust. . . . In comparing these two characters [i.e., Joseph and Charles] I do not contend for the merit of Joseph, but I wish to show that there is not that balance in favor of Charles which there ought to be for the *exemplary* character in a piece when weighed against him who is exhibited as an object of unlimited aversion. . . .

It has been said that this is a second attempt to destroy the taste for sentimental comedy revived by Mr. Cumberland. It will be readily acknowledged, that the plays of that gentleman may tend to produce an affectation of sentiment; but it is better to affect sentiment than vice: and Mr. Cumberland has judiciously executed the whole duty of an author, which is, not *only* to paint nature, but to paint *such* parts of it, as every good man would wish to see imitated.

V

THE PLAY AND ITS CHARACTERS

1. Lamb's Criticism [1]

Amidst the mortifying circumstances attendant upon growing old, it is something to have seen *The School for Scandal* in its glory. This comedy grew out of Congreve and Wycherley, but gathered some allays of the sentimental comedy which followed theirs. It is impossible that it should be now *acted*, though it continues, at long intervals, to be announced in the bills. Its hero, when Palmer played it at least, was Joseph Surface. When I remember the gay boldness, the graceful solemn plausibility, the measured step, the insinuating voice — to express it in a word the downright *acted* villany of the part, so different from the pressure of conscious actual wickedness, — the hypocritical assumption of hypocrisy, — which made Jack so deservedly a favourite in that character, I must needs conclude the present generation of playgoers more virtuous than myself, or more dense. I freely confess that he divided the palm with me with his better brother; that, in fact, I liked him quite as well. Not but there are passages, — like that, for instance, where Joseph is made to refuse a pittance to a poor relation — incongruities which Sheridan was forced upon by the attempt to join the artificial with the sentimental comedy, either of which must destroy the other — but over these obstructions Jack's manner floated him so lightly, that a refusal from him no more shocked you, than the easy compliance of Charles gave you in reality any pleasure; you got over the paltry question as quickly as you could, to get back into the regions of pure comedy, where no cold moral reigns. The highly artificial manner of Palmer in this character counteracted every disagreeable impression which you might have received from the contrast, supposing them real, between the two brothers. You did not believe in Joseph with the same faith with which you be-

[1] From *The Artificial Comedy of the Last Century.*

lieved in Charles. The latter was a pleasant reality, the former a no less pleasant poetical foil to it. The comedy, I have said, is incongruous; a mixture of Congreve with sentimental incompatibilities; the gaiety upon the whole is buoyant; but it required the consummate art of Palmer to reconcile the discordant elements.

A player with Jack's talents, if we had one now, would not dare to do the part in the same manner. He would instinctively avoid every turn which might tend to unrealise and so to make the character fascinating. He must take his cue from his spectators, who would expect a bad man and a good man as rigidly opposed to each other as the death-beds of those geniuses are contrasted in the prints, which I am sorry to say have disappeared from the windows of my old friend Carrington Bowles, of St. Paul's Churchyard memory — (an exhibition as venerable as the adjacent cathedral, and almost coeval) of the bad and good man at the hour of death; where the ghastly apprehensions of the former, — and truly the grim phantom with his reality of a toasting fork is not to be despised, — so finely contrast with the meek complacent kissing of the rod, — taking it in like honey and butter, — with which the latter submits to the scythe of the gentler bleeder, Time, who wields his lancet with the apprehensive finger of a popular young ladies' surgeon. What flesh, like loving grass, would not covet to meet halfway the stroke of such a delicate mower? — John Palmer was twice an actor in this exquisite part. He was playing to you all the while that he was playing upon Sir Peter and his lady. You had the first intimation of a sentiment before it was on his lips. His altered voice was meant to you, and you were to suppose that his fictitious co-flutterers on the stage perceived nothing at all of it. What was it to you if that half-reality, the husband, was over-reached by the puppetry — or the thin thing (Lady Teazle's reputation) was persuaded it was dying of a plethory? The fortunes of Othello and Desdemona were not concerned in it. Poor Jack has passed from the stage in good time, that he did not live to this our age of seriousness. The pleasant old Teazle *King*, too, is gone in good time. His manner would scarce

have past current in our day. We must love or hate — acquit or condemn — censure or pity — exert our detestable coxcombry of moral judgment upon everything. Joseph Surface, to go down now, must be a downright revolting villain — no compromise — his first appearance must shock and give horror — his specious plausibilities, which the pleasurable faculties of our fathers welcomed with such hearty greetings, knowing that no harm (dramatic harm even) could come, or was meant to come of them, must inspire a cold and killing aversion. Charles (the real canting person of the scene — for the hypocrisy of Joseph has its ulterior legitimate ends, but his brother's professions of a good heart centre in downright self-satisfaction) must be *loved*, and Joseph *hated*. To balance one disagreeable reality with another, Sir Peter Teazle must be no longer the comic idea of a fretful old bachelor bridegroom, whose teasings (while King acted it) were evidently as much played off at you, as they were meant to concern anybody on the stage, — he must be a real person, capable in law of sustaining an injury — a person towards whom duties are to be acknowledged — the genuine crim-con antagonist of the villanous seducer Joseph. To realise him more, his sufferings under his unfortunate match must have the downright pungency of life — must (or should) make you not mirthful but uncomfortable, just as the same predicament would move you in a neighbor or old friend. The delicious scenes which give the play its name and zest, must affect you in the same serious manner as if you heard the reputation of a dear female friend attacked in your real presence. Crabtree, and Sir Benjamin — those poor snakes that live but in the sunshine of your mirth — must be ripened by this hot-bed process of realisation into asps or amphisbaenas; and Mrs. Candour — O! frightful! become a hooded serpent. Oh who that remembers Parsons and Dodd — the wasp and butterfly of *The School for Scandal* — in those two characters; and charming natural Miss Pope, the perfect gentlewoman as distinguished from the fine lady of comedy, in this latter part — would forego the true scenic delight — the escape from life — the oblivion of consequences — the holiday

barring out of the pedant Reflection — those Saturnalia of two or three brief hours, well won from the world — to sit instead at one of our modern plays — to have his coward conscience (that forsooth must not be left for a moment) stimulated with perpetual appeals — dulled rather, and blunted, as a faculty without repose must be — and his moral vanity pampered with images of notional justice, notional beneficences, lives saved without the spectators' risk, and fortunes given away that cost the author nothing?

2. Hazlitt's Criticism [1]

Mr. Sheridan has been justly called "a dramatic star of the first magnitude"; and, indeed, among the comic writers of the last century, he "shines like Hesperus among the lesser lights." . . . If some of the characters in *The School for Scandal* were contained in Murphy's comedy of *Know your own Mind* (and certainly some of Dashwood's detached speeches and satirical sketches are written with quite as firm and masterly a hand as any of those given to the members of the scandalous club, Mrs. Candour or Lady Sneerwell), yet they were buried in it for want of grouping and relief, like the colours of a well-drawn picture sunk in the canvas. Sheridan brought them out, and exhibited them in all their glory. If that gem, the character of Joseph Surface, was Murphy's, the splendid and more valuable setting was Sheridan's. He took Murphy's Malvil from his lurking-place in the closet, and 'dragged the struggling monster into day' upon the stage. That is, he gave interest, life, and action, or, in other words, its dramatic being, to the mere conception and written specimens of a character. This is the merit of Sheridan's comedies, that every thing in them *tells;* there is no labour in vain. His Comic Muse does not go about prying into obscure corners, or collecting idle curiosities, but shews her laughing face, and points to her rich treasure — the follies of mankind. She is garlanded and crowned with roses and vine-leaves. Her eyes sparkle with delight, and her heart runs over with good-natured malice.

[1] From *On the Comic Writers of the Last Century.*

Her step is firm and light, and her ornaments consummate! *The School for Scandal* is, if not the most original, perhaps the most finished and faultless comedy which we have. When it is acted, you hear people all around you exclaiming, "Surely it is impossible for any thing to be cleverer." The scene in which Charles sells all the old family pictures but his uncle's, who is the purchaser in disguise, and that of the discovery of Lady Teazle when the screen falls, are among the happiest and most highly wrought that comedy, in its wide and brilliant range, can boast. Besides the wit and ingenuity of this play, there is a genial spirit of frankness and generosity about it, that relieves the heart as well as clears the lungs. It professes a faith in the natural goodness, as well as habitual depravity of human nature. While it strips off the mask of hypocrisy, it inspires a confidence between man and man. As often as it is acted, it must serve to clear the air of that low, creeping, pestilent fog of cant and mysticism, which threatens to confound every native impulse, or honest conviction, in the nauseous belief of a perpetual lie, and the laudable profession of systematic hypocrisy.

3. Taine's Criticism[1]

In Sheridan, the playwright is also a man of letters; if, through mere animal and social spirit, he wished to amuse others and to amuse himself, he does not forget the interests of his talent and the care for his reputation. He has taste, he appreciates the refinements of style, the worth of a new image, of a striking contrast, of a witty and well-considered insinuation. He has, above all, wit, a wonderful conversational wit, the art of rousing and sustaining the attention, of being biting, varied, of taking his hearers unawares, of throwing in a repartee, of setting folly in relief, of accumulating one after another witticisms and happy phrases. He brought himself to perfection subsequently to his first play, having acquired theatrical experience, writing and erasing; trying various scenes, recasting, arranging them; his desire

[1] From *A History of English Literature.* Translated by H. Van Laun.

was that nothing should arrest the interest, no improbability shock the spectator; that his comedy might glide on with the precision, certainty, uniformity of a good machine. This kind of writing, artificial and condensed as the satires of La Bruyère, is like a cut phial, into which the author has distilled all his reflections, his reading, his wit, without keeping anything for himself.

What is there in this celebrated *School for Scandal?* And how is it that it has cast upon English comedy, which day by day was being more and more forgotten, the radiance of a last success? Sheridan took two characters from Fielding, Blifil and Tom Jones; two plays of Molière, *Le Misanthrope* and *Tartuffe;* and from these puissant materials, condensed with admirable cleverness, he has constructed the most brilliant firework imaginable. Molière has only one female slanderer, Célimène; the other characters serve only to give her a cue: there is quite enough of such a jeering woman; she rails on within certain bounds, without hurry, like a true queen of the drawing-room, who has time to converse, who knows that she is listened to, who listens to herself: she is a woman of society, who preserves the tone of refined conversation; and in order to smooth down the harshness, her slanders are interrupted by the calm reason and sensible discourse of the amiable Eliante. Molière represents the malice of the world without exaggeration; but in Sheridan they are rather caricatured than depicted. "Ladies, your servants," says Sir Peter; "mercy upon me! The whole set — a character dead at every sentence." In fact, they are ferocious: it is a regular quarry; they even befoul one another, to deepen the outrage.[1] Their animosity is so bitter that they lower themselves to play the part of buffoons. The most elegant person in the room, Lady Teazle, shows her teeth to ape a ridiculous lady, draws her mouth on one side, and makes faces. There is no pause, no softening; sarcasms fly about like pistol-shots. The author had laid in a stock, he had to use them up. He himself is speaking through the mouth of each of his characters; he gives them all the same wit, that is his own, his irony, his harshness, his picturesque

[1] Act I, Scene i, lines 280–93.

vigour; whatever they are, clowns, fops, old maids, no matter, the author's main business is to break out into twenty explosions in a minute.[1] In this manner has he pointed, multiplied, driven in to the quick the measured epigrams of Molière. And yet is it possible to grow weary of such a well-sustained discharge of malice and witticisms?

Observe also the change which the hypocrite undergoes under Sheridan's treatment. Doubtless all the grandeur disappears from the part. Joseph Surface does not uphold, like Tartuffe, the interest of the comedy; he does not possess, like his ancestor, the nature of a cad, the boldness of a man of action, the manners of a beadle, the neck and shoulders of a monk. He is merely selfish and cautious; if he is engaged in an intrigue, it is rather against his will; he is only half-hearted in the matter, like a correct young man, well dressed, with a fair income, timorous and fastidious by nature, discreet in manners, and without violent passions; all about him is soft and polished, he takes his tone from the times, he makes no display of religion, though he does of morality; he is a man of measured speech, of lofty sentiments, a disciple of Dr. Johnson or of Rousseau, a dealer in set phrases. There is nothing on which to construct a drama in this commonplace person; and the fine situations which Sheridan takes from Molière lose half their force through depending on such pitiful support. But how this insufficiency is covered by the quickness, abundance, naturalness of the incidents! how skill makes up for everything! how it seems capable of supplying everything! even genius! how the spectator laughs to see Joseph caught in his sanctuary like a fox in his hole; obliged to hide the wife, then to conceal the husband; forced to run from the one to the other; busy in hiding the one behind the screen, and the other in his closet; reduced, in casting himself into his own snares, in justifying those whom he wished to ruin, the husband in the eyes of the wife, the nephew in the eyes of the uncle, to ruin the only man whom he wished to justify, namely, the precious and immaculate Joseph Surface; to turn out in the end ridicu-

[1] For example, Act I, Scene i, lines 427–50; Act I, Scene i, lines 471–87; Act II, Scene ii, lines 158–78.

lous, odious, baffled, confounded, in spite of his adroitness, even by reason of his adroitness, step by step, without quarter or remedy; to sneak off, poor fox, with his tail between his legs, his skin spoiled, amid hootings and laughter! And how, at the same time, side by side with this, the naggings of Sir Peter and his wife, the suppers, songs, the picture sale at the spendthrift's house, weave a comedy in a comedy, and renew the interest by renewing the attention! We cease to think of the meagreness of the characters, as we cease to think of the deviation from truth; we are willingly carried away by the vivacity of the action, dazzled by the brilliancy of the dialogue; we are charmed, applaud; admit that, after all, next to great inventive faculty, animation and wit are the most agreeable gifts in the world; we appreciate them in their season, and find that they also have their place in the literary banquet; and that if they are not worth as much as the substantial joints, the natural and generous wines of the first course, at least they furnish the dessert.

4. Sichel's Criticism [1]

Sheridan and Congreve

The most obvious fact about *The School for Scandal* is its life and longevity. No old English comedy since Shakespeare has worn so well. This is not due merely to its blaze of wit, still less to its local colour. Something elemental must reside in a work that lasts in differing countries and centuries with undimned lustre, and persists both as literature and on the stage. Congreve's wit has not so persevered, though there is a freshness about it even when it languishes in his hot-house world. The reason is obvious. Congreve is a spectator, he stands aloof from his own creations, arranges, criticises, disposes, eyes them like a connoisseur. He is the arbiter of superb elegance, inaccessible to the vulgar; and his wit is an icicle — in his one lurid comedy, *The Double Dealer*, an iceberg. On neither side can Sheridan approach him. But Sheridan's wit is even more salient and infinitely more joyous. The sunshine dances

[1] Abridged from W. Sichel's *Sheridan*, I, chap. XI, pages 552–88.

across its facets, and the play of human nature lies, as Sir Henry Irving insisted, at the root of his charm. Sheridan never keeps his characters at a distance; he laughs with and at them. While Congreve sits in state with crown and sceptre, Sheridan jests with his merry court around him; while Congreve never errs, Sheridan heightens his effects by mistakes; Congreve is infallible, but Sheridan is rebellious — the protestant of polished comedy. Compared with Goldsmith, Sheridan is cold; compared with Congreve, he is warm and sociable. His sympathy, no doubt, springs more from the head than the heart; but it is sympathy, and a sympathy which Congreve lacks. The *School* is more than a "Congreve rocket."

It is customary to think of it merely as a comedy of wit with conventional types for its mouthpiece, as a young man's play, drawn more from books than from men. The assumption is easy, but a little study will soon disprove it. True, its theme is ancient, older than civilization, as old, indeed, as the sixty-fourth psalm, while the contrasted brothers hark back to Jacob and Esau. Nor, as an episode, was it new to the stage. A strain of scandal enters into all the early comedies where coxcombs are prominent, for "raillery," says Congreve, "is the best qualification in a woman's man." Scandalmongering intersperses and enlivens his *Old Bachelor*, *Way of the World*, and *Double Dealer*, — a play which afforded old Sheridan a favourite part and which his son revived at Drury Lane. Clarissa in Vanbrugh's *Confedcracy*, Olivia in Wycherley's *Plain Dealer*, carry on the tradition of feminine slander. Slander occurs in Molière's *Misanthrope* and prompted a famous passage in Beaumarchais *Figaro*, *The School for Scandal's* junior by seven years.

But Sheridan was the first to make scandal the sustained motive of a complete play. The scandalous college creates Lady Teazle's flirtations and Sir Peter's jealousy. The dread of it well-nigh seduces its licentiate from her frivolous innocence when she is taught to "sin in her own defence and part with her virtue to preserve her reputation." And every variety of scandal is presented, from its butterfly to its wasp, from the votaries, like

A new treatment of an old theme

Mrs. Candour, who kill time and reputations at once, to the villains who trade on it, — one out of revenge, another from cunning, and a third for a livelihood. The very sentence which shocked the Parisian taste by adding a wish for widowhood to Lady Teazle's bickerings with her husband — a sentence erased by Sheridan — is in keeping with the situation. It betokens the wreck of all finer feeling by assassins who would fain strip their victim, "though he *is* your brother, and the light sacrifice of her better self to her desire to shine in repartee." How changed her voice sounds when the awakening comes, and Joseph exclaims, "The woman is mad!" "No, sir, she has recovered her senses, and your own arts have furnished her with the means. Sir Peter, I do not expect you to credit me, but the tenderness you expressed for me when you could not think I was a witness to it, has so penetrated to my heart that had I left this place without the shame of this discovery, my future life should have spoken the sincerity of my gratitude." To such soft spots as these, — and there are others, — to the lights and shades of character around them, our eyes are blinded by the glare of uniform wit; and this Sheridan recognised as being the main fault of the whole. But if its leading persons be analysed it will be found that they are by no means the figure-heads of melodrama.

Joseph Surface is not the conventional stage hypocrite, nor is he a Tartuffe, the sole monster in the gallery of Molière.

Joseph Surface and Tartuffe

Tartuffe is a red-faced, sanctimonious ruffian, cowing a superstitious household beyond the bounds either of his unction or of their credulity. Such was not Sheridan's view or experience of humbugs *in excelsis*. Tartuffe is a savage, Surface is the Iago of comedy, a polished schemer with a persuasive tongue. But he is more than plausible. As M. Taine has pointed out, he is sad and tender to excess, "with an air serious and noble." "He lays his hand on his heart, tears are in his eyes, and a flood of fine sentences on his lips, while he smirches his brother's good name and attempts the honour of his neighbour's wife." The rhetoric that conveys his assumed sentimentality has grown into a habit. It has become almost

natural, and at the very opening he airs it on the confederate who is obliged to remind him that he is "among friends." Tartuffe is *farouche* and resembles the vulgar fiend of a mystery-play, but the insinuating Joseph is more like a comic version of Milton's Belial. Molière's pietist, like Dickens's Chadband, is satirised only from the outside; Sheridan's casuist is a far subtler conception.

And there is another *trait* which has been overlooked. What Joseph really worships is reputation. He worships it more than the pleasure which it veils, and he worships it so much that he loses sight of character altogether; indeed, he regrets that his character is so good that "he doubts he will be exposed at last." To be thought good is his ideal, but he is unable to be so, and so his spurious respectability goes to pieces through the only bit of unmixed nature about him, his real infatuation for Lady Teazle. It is this which dupes him into remaining Lady Sneerwell's unwitting tool, though he hoodwinks even her regarding Lady Teazle, and Lady Teazle, in the matter of Maria. He sets out to win Maria's fortune, meets with the other on the road, and ends by a self-betrayal. His love of appearances becomes his Nemesis, and so true is he to life that Madame de Genlis [1] was at once named "Josephine Surface." His "sentiments" bear the same relation to sentiment that coxcombry does to breeding, or flirtation to love. Demure and smooth, he clings to them even when the game is up, and the soft effrontery of his farewell is inimitable: "Sir, I am so confounded to find that Lady Sneerwell could be guilty of suborning Mr. Snake in this manner, to impose on us all, that I know not what to say. However, lest her revengeful spirit should prompt her to injure my brother, I *had* certainly better follow her directly. For the man who attempts —"

Joseph's worship of reputation

[1] A noted French novelist, dramatist, and writer of memoirs. She wrote voluminously during the Revolution. Her style is marked by clever sarcasm and witty persiflage. *Cf.* Saint-Beuve, *Causeries*, III. In 1792 Sheridan gave a *fête* in her honor and that of "Pamela" (later Lady Edward Fitzgerald) at Islesworth. Here it is said, Sheridan's own "distresses" required the services of bailiffs — whom he induced to pass the ices. *Cf.* Sir Benjamin Backbite's slur upon Charles Surface, Act I, Scene i, line 407.

I have already said that Joseph is a hypocrite in a sentimental suit. The real sentimentalist is Charles Surface — Sheridan, Tom Jones, who you will, at a period when generosity and good intentions were called Benevolence, and Prudence, "clinging to the green suckers of youth" like "ivy round a sapling," was held to spoil "the growth of the tree." Saws like "Boys will be boys" and "the reformed rake" would seem to offer but scant pasturage for sentimentalism, but Charles's sentimentality is patent. It colours his affection for the portrait of "that ill-looking little fellow over the settee"; it rings in his parting words ". . . You shall be my monitor — my gentle guide. — Ah! can I leave the virtuous path those eyes illumine?" It is the ground for his acquisition of the family house from Joseph. It leavens the whole crop of his wild oats, and backs all his easy virtue and loose morality. So long as a young man does nothing "false or mean," despises the money which he dissipates, lavishes alms on distress, and makes no sham professions, he is estimable, and estimable because these qualities hold the seeds of something better. Such is Charles Surface in a play that was originally sentimental, and such is Sheridan's ideal of a good fellow. No one for a moment supposes that after marriage Charles will drop his motto of "Damn your economy" any more than that Joseph after his detection will cease to be taunted with "Damn your sentiments."

Charles's sentimentality

If Joseph cants dishonestly from worship of the world's opinion, Charles also cants honestly in his airy bravado. The one pretends to virtue, the other —

> "Compounds for sins he has a mind to
> By damning those he's not inclined to."

In one point, however, the critics have wronged the libertine. The man who has "often given grounds of uneasiness" to so many "worthy men" has been called heartless for his bewildered irony when the screen falls. But the circumstances warrant it. Not only is Charles puzzled, but he has long been traduced by every actor in that memorable scene. At that moment he believes that his guardian has played eavesdropper, and he knows that his brother is a

traitor contriving his ruin. Lady Teazle stands abashed, the damning evidence of what he is unwilling to suspect. Is it cruel in him then to burst out and mock the conspirators ere he makes his exit? "Egad, you all seem to have been diverting yourselves here at hide and seek, and I don't see who is out of the secret. Shall I beg your ladyship to inform me? Not a word! — Brother, will *you* be pleased to explain this matter? What! is Morality dumb too? — Sir Peter, though I found you in the dark, perhaps you are not so *now!* All mute! — Well — though *I* can make nothing of the affair, I suppose you perfectly understand one another, so I will leave you to yourselves. Brother, I'm sorry to find you have given that worthy man grounds for so much uneasiness. Sir Peter! There's nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment!" Surely Charles is justified. And for Joseph too one plea may be urged. Charles's vaguely-hinted gallantries lurk wholly in the background, while of Joseph's prim profligacy we hear no end. This is natural enough, because Charles consorts with a set of sporting friends who are unlikely to malign him, and he only frequents the scandalous common room for a glimpse of Maria. But though this touch is of nature, it is also of art. It heightens the antithesis between the two characters and our sympathy with the younger. Let Joseph take the benefit of our illusion. We should be less shocked at him if we were shocked at Charles.

Lady Teazle, again, is no mere type of a girl yoked to ridiculous age like the tame Lady Townley in Colman's best comedy, *The Provoked Husband.* Marrying to escape her home boredom, she succumbs to the lure of fashion. All along fashion is her temptress, and in the original draft "Jenny" dwells on the fashionableness even of her father. To be thought in the mode, she joins the crew of caballers, though there is no malice in her impulsive composition. Wit, however, does enter into it, and in the war of tongues she holds her own with the best of them, as the child of nature usually does, and as Sheridan emphasised by a jotting in an early note-book for the play. "Lady Teazle," he writes, "has wit, a great virtue" — "tie up the knocker of her tongue," while he adds that "Milady" should

Lady Teazle

wear "clothes with the gloss on." She is a country girl striving to be a lady of quality, and as such she should be acted. Fashion makes her blurt out heartless repartees which she regrets. Fashion motives her cold coquetries. To fashion, her old bachelor of a husband bars the way. She listens to Joseph because a cicisbeo is as indispensable to the *ton* as the pair of "white cats" to her carriage and the "bags and bouquets" to her footmen. And it is only when accident saves her from the brink of catastrophe that she realises how nearly all her light flutter has verged on ruin. Her country upbringing stands her in good stead when the crisis comes, and she shames Joseph by asking, in the finest line of the play, whether "honour" is not best left out of his argument. This is all Sheridan's own, and the blend in her of art and artlessness, of village hoyden and fine lady, imparts a certain smart simplicity, absent from the Mrs. Pinchwell of Wycherley's *Country Wife* — that shy *ingénue* with a despicable husband. She too longs for the town, but she covets its pleasures and has no pretensions to society; she is farcical — a mere marionette in an interlude of intrigue. Lady Teazle, on the other hand, is not *intrigante* at all. Her archness and freshness are inexhaustible, and in the whole range of comedy there is not a more delightful dialogue than hers with her husband when they will "never, never differ again." She is queen of the frolic stage, winsome even in disgrace. Her very lapses give the impression of scrapes, and her penitence is an April shower. There is no finality about her. Her quick tongue and quicker moods play on the monotony of a husband whom they redeem from being a lay figure, and, indeed, sometimes render pathetic.

Sir Peter

Sir Peter is a gentleman, every inch of him, and his first thought when he emerges from his hiding-place is to exculpate Joseph. His fondness is not that of a dotard, nor is he the mere *citoyen bafoué* of ancient comedy. He is fifty, — the equivalent of sixty now, — but though old enough to be her father, he is not bewitched by beauty alone. She tantalises him into admiration. "Though I can't make her love me, there is great satisfaction in quarrelling with her," he soliloquises; "and I think she never appears to such

advantage as when she is doing everything in her power to plague me." Their battledore and shuttlecock interchange — point on point, as was Sheridan's habit — is not limited to repartees; the picture of her country life — a picture that smells of lavender — is shared between them. Lady Teazle is no bad emblem of the play itself, so elaborate as to seem artificial yet, really and underneath, naïve — a rustic romp schooled to drop a court curtsey; a piece of eglantine, trained and transplanted into a *parterre*. And their blemishes are the same. The comedy is always just going to touch us — and then laughs our emotions away. It plays with the passions which it introduces, and sometimes deafens their appeal by the salvo of its wit. This is owing to its mixed origin, for it started as a sentimental melodrama with witty interludes, while it ended by almost eliminating the part of Maria. None the less it remains a truly human document.

Such lights and shades mitigate the metallic gleam of the play's enamel, and the whole drama is more flexible than it seems — a fresh cause for its permanence. More technical qualities also assist its unfading freshness. Sheridan is a complete master of stage illusion. However improbable some of the situations, as, for instance, the auction-scene and the constant encounters at each other's houses of persons the least likely to meet there; however dazzling the sameness of the wit, a sameness caused by the transference of phrases in the process of composition, and absent, be it noted, from the homely characters of Rowley and Sir Oliver; however inadequate some of the motives, the characterization is natural as we see it represented. It has often been said (and Cumberland said so at the time) that the hurried exit of Joseph when he leaves Charles alone with Sir Peter, and Lady Teazle in ambush, is a clumsy contrivance. But it does not seem so when the play is acted, nor is it really a stage awkwardness. Lady Sneerwell is announced, and her presence would have been fatal. Instead of finding some excuse to dismiss her — which she would probably have overridden — Joseph loses his head, and takes the chance of a moment's absence. Moreover, had Lady Sneerwell walked up, the telling scenes of the next act, with their stultification

Sheridan's technical skill

of rumour, would have been useless, and we should have missed their foil to the earlier developments of malice. It has been objected that everyone talks,[1] and little happens. But we do not perceive this as we listen. Not only does the subject necessitate the dialogue, but the dialogue *is* the plot — a plot of idea which leads up wonderfully to the three crowning episodes. Sheridan was an adept at stage construction. There are few playwrights who, after the auction and screen scenes, would have ventured on a triple anti-climax — the babble about the supposed duel, the buffeting of Stanley-Premium-Surface, and the final unmasking of Snake. Yet, so adapted are these to the *finale*, so deftly and humorously handled, that they are not recognisable as anti-climaxes at all. Again, Charles's devotion to Maria is only hinted, though the pair was to have played a much larger part, and Sheridan had meant to put long love-passages in their mouths.[2] These, however, would have been excrescences, and the play is far more artistic as it stands. Nor is the drama's tessellation (mainfest when we trace its pieces) perceptible in its completed form. Its character, phases and atmosphere seem harmonious and call up a little world of their own. Everyone moves and breathes and has his being, and the inconsistencies appear consistent.

Sheridan's originality

Enough has been said of the *School's* originality; it is certainly more plagiarised from the plagiarising. But a word of duty must be devoted to the worn topic of its "plagiarisms." The hypocrites of literature have been scrutinised to account for Joseph. Congreve's Maskwell will not fit him, for Maskwell is sombre and saturnine. Fielding's quack philosopher is equally remote; of Molière's Tartuffe we have already spoken. Not one of the stage impostors suggests Joseph's demure and dapper sentimentality. Even a poor play by Arthur Murphy, entitled, *Know Your Own Mind*, has been pressed into service and its Malvil singled out as Joseph Surface's original. This, however, is a false scent. Beyond the fact that Malvil is a traitor held up

[1] See page xxix.

[2] He is said to have refrained because realizing that neither the actor nor the actress cast for these parts could "make love."

as a pattern of propriety, and that in a single instance he airs a trace of "the man who," there is little real likeness between them. But a stray hint or so for Joseph Surface may well come from Vizard in Farquhar's *The Constant Couple*, and these vague assimilations have hitherto passed unobserved. Vizard is a smug downright hypocrite, who bears little resemblance to the dexterous Joseph, but in some superficial features he recalls him. Like Joseph, he uses books as a blind for his vices[1] — the very *trait* which roused the young Shelley's ire when Peacock dragged him to see the *School*. Vizard is held up as "a pattern" to youth. Vizard, too, worships respectability more than the enjoyments which it masks: "I would sooner forfeit my life, nay, my pleasure," he owns, "than my reputation." Remembering that a chance phrase from this piece also found its way into *The Rivals*, and how fond Sheridan was of Farquhar, we may guess that some "faded ideas" from it "floated in his imagination." They amount to very little, scarcely to more than can be squeezed out of the "Damn your morals" of Congreve's Bluffe, whose character has no connection with Joseph, or from the Congreve trick of the participle-adjective in phrases like "a forgetting night" that suggest Sheridan's "damned disinheriting countenance." The mould and stamp, however, of Joseph remain original and differentiate him from all other hypocrites on the comic stage.

Farquhar's The Constant couple

So too with the method of his unmasking. In Congreve's *Double Dealer* — one of Tartuffe's many offshoots — Lady Touchwood and Cynthia listen behind a screen, but they overhear only at a distance; there is no discovery. In Cumberland's *West Indian* there is a listener behind a door, but the situation is different, and the device conventional. Vizard acts by a letter, and the letter betrays him, as seems to have been Sheridan's first expedient in the "Clerimont" fragment. Molière's Tartuffe is clumsily hidden under a table when Orgon detects him. Sheridan's screen scene, with its double ambush of wife and husband, its quick movement and the air of practical joke that belongs to com-

The screen scene

[1] See Act IV, Scene iii, line 130.

edy, is as ingenious as it is graceful. If any hint came from the sordid lurking-place of Moll Seagrim in Thwackum's garret,[1] the impression of the whole is so dissimilar that Fielding would have been puzzled at the likeness. As for the "Spanish" source to which some have ascribed the episode, it is unnamed, and seems mythical. A nearer analogy is furnished by Almaviva's ambush in Beaumarchais's *The Barber of Seville*, preceding the *School* by two years, and afterwards acted in London. Sheridan's indebtedness, however, was probably to some incident in real life. The elegance of *tournure* throughout Sheridan's comedy reaches its acme in this climax. "If Aristotle himself had written a whole chapter professedly against screens," wrote Cumberland himself, "I would not have placed Lady Teazle out of earshot to have saved his ears from the pillory."

Echoes of Restoration comedy

Half echoes of Restoration comedy are also audible in other parts of the *School*. Vanbrugh's *Relapse*, which became Sheridan's *Trip to Scarborough*, speaks of "speculative love"; the *School* speaks of "speculative" benevolence. Vanbrugh, again, in his *Provoked Wife* uses the phrase of "Damn your morals." Congreve's *Way of the World* makes a scandalmonger titter when a girl looks pale. The same malicious insinuation is levelled at Maria. No stress can be laid on the duplication of names any more than in the case of *The Rivals*. Sheridan's "Surface," as we have seen, hails from a minor part in his mother's unpublished play, and Sheridan had first named his brace of brothers "Pliant" and "Plausible." Wycherley's *Plain Dealer* has a "Plausible," and Congreve's *Double Dealer* a "Plyant." Ben Jonson and Suckling had begun the lyrical succession of toasting songs, and Congreve's *Way of the World* followed them with "Prithee fill me the glass." And further, a conceit in the *School's* closing verses (verses constantly trimmed and varied) may be due to Farquhar, though the plagiary-hunters have misascribed it to a phrase in a *Life of Dr. Clarke*. The line runs, "Thou still must rule because I must obey." In Farquhar's *Sir Harry Wildair* occurs, "For neither would stoop to command 'cause both

[1] In Fielding's *Tom Jones*.

thought it glory to obey." It is to Farquhar in the main that we must look for these scattered promptings. His wicked Lady Lurewell, to whom "nothing is so sweet as a malicious story," says, "I hate to have any woman more virtuous than myself." And here perhaps we get the foundation of Lady Sneerwell. But Farquhar more than all his compeers drew from Nature, and Lady Lurewells and Sneerwells abounded at Bath. The wish to drag down Sheridan by leaving him nothing of his own belongs to the Sneerwell character. When Watkins wrote his so-called *Memoirs* of Sheridan, he repeated a slander that actually ascribed *The School for Scandal* to "a young lady in Thames Street." Sheridan never troubled to refute such tattle,[1] which was not confined to his comedies. As he once wrote, he was "inured to misrepresentation."

[1] Professor Nettleton suggests that in the following lines of *The Critic* Sheridan may have been striking at those who abetted this "insinuation that he had stolen *The School for Scandal* from a manuscript left in his hands": —

"*Sir Fretful*: Besides — I can tell you it is not always so safe to leave a play in the hands of those who write themselves.

"*Sneer*. What, they may steal from them, hey, my dear Plagiary?

"*Sir Fretful*: Steal! — to be sure they may: and, egad, serve your best thoughts as gypsies do stolen children, disfigure them to make 'em pass for their own."

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

By RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

A PORTRAIT

ADDRESSED TO MRS. CREWE, WITH THE COMEDY OF THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

BY R. B. SHERIDAN, ESQ.

TELL me, ye prim adepts in Scandal's school,
Who rail by precept, and detract by rule,
Lives there no character, so tried, so known,
So deck'd with grace, and so unlike your own,
That even you assist her fame to raise,
Approve by envy, and by silence praise?
Attend! — a model shall attract your view —
Daughters of calumny, I summon you!
You shall decide if this a portrait prove,
Or fond creation of the Muse and Love.
Attend, ye virgin critics, shrewd and sage,
Ye matron censors of this childish age,
Whose peering eye and wrinkled front declare
A fixed antipathy to young and fair;
By cunning, cautious; or by nature, cold,
In maiden madness, virulently bold!

Mrs. Crewe. "A Portrait" is one of the best dedicatory poems in the language. It was at first circulated in manuscript and a copy was sent to Mrs. Crewe with a manuscript of the play. Mrs. Crewe was a beautiful and intellectual woman, a leader of society, intimate with the Sheridans, and the friend of Burke and Fox. Sir Joshua Reynolds thrice painted her portrait. Frances Burney wrote that Mrs. Crewe surpassed even Mrs. Sheridan — one of the most charming women of her time — in "elegance of beauty." Mrs. Fulke Greville, the mother of Mrs. Crewe, was an arbitress of literary taste of the day.

Attend! ye skilled to coin the precious tale,
Creating proof, where innuendos fail!
Whose practised memories, cruelly exact,
Omit no circumstance, except the fact!
Attend all ye who boast — or old or young —
The living libel of a slanderous tongue!
So shall my theme as far contrasted be,
As saints by fiends, or hymns by calumny
Come, gentle Amoret (for 'neath that name,
In worthier verse is sung thy beauty's fame);
Come — for but thee who seeks the Muse? and while
Celestial blushes check thy conscious smile,
With timid grace and hesitating eye,
The perfect model, which I boast, supply.
Vain Muse! couldst thou the humblest sketch create
Of her, or slightest charm couldst imitate —
Could thy blest strain in kindred colours trace
The faintest wonder of her form and face —
Poets would study the immortal line,
And *Reynolds* own *his* art subdued by thine;
That art, which well might added lustre give
To Nature's best, and Heaven's superlative:

25. **Amoret.** In Spenser's *Faërie Queene*, Amoret is the impersonation of loveliness and wifely devotion. The name appears also in Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess*. It was in verses by Fox, written in Mrs. Crewe's honor, that she was first referred to by this name.

36. **Reynolds.** Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–92), the famous portrait painter. With Sheridan he was a member of Dr. Johnson's Literary Club. Mrs. Sheridan sat to him several times, and for her he had intense admiration. Her portrait as St. Cecilia, with two listening cherubs, Reynolds once spoke of as "the best picture I ever painted."

On *Granby's* cheek might bid new glories rise,
Or point a purer beam from *Devon's* eyes!
Hard is the task to shape that beauty's praise,
Whose judgment scorns the homage flattery pays!
But praising Amoret we cannot err,
No tongue o'ervalues Heaven, or flatters her!
Yet she by Fate's perverseness — she alone
Would doubt our truth, nor deem such praise her own!
Adorning Fashion, unadorn'd by dress,
Simple from taste, and not from carelessness;
Discreet in gesture, in deportment mild,
Not stiff with prudence, nor uncouthly wild:
No state has *Amoret!* no studied mien;
She frowns no *goddess*, and she moves no *queen.*
The softer charm that in her manner lies
Is framed to captivate, yet not surprise;
It justly suits th' expression of her face —
'T is less than dignity, and more than grace!
On her pure cheek the native hue is such,
That form'd by Heav'n to be admired so much,
The hand divine, with a less partial care,
Might well have fix'd a fainter crimson there,

39. **Granby.** Mary Isabella, Marchioness of Granby, afterward Duchess of Rutland. In her day, party rancor spread even to the ladies. As a supporter of Pitt, the Duchess of Granby was hostile to Mrs. Crewe and the Duchess of Devonshire.

40. **Devon.** The famous Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, one of the leading spirits among the women of her time. Her influence in politics was such that in 1784 she secured the reëlection of Charles James Fox to Parliament. One of Reynolds's most popular portraits represents her with her child. For an extended account of her part in Sheridan's career, and one of her diaries, see W. Sichel's *Sheridan.*

52. Cf. "She moves a goddess, and she looks a queen." Pope, *Homer's Iliad,* III, 208.

And bade the gentle inmate of her breast —
Inshrined Modesty! — supply the rest.
But who the peril of her lips shall paint?
Strip them of smiles — still, still all words are faint!
But moving Love himself appears to teach
Their action, though denied to rule her speech;
And thou who seest her speak and dost not hear,
Mourn not her distant accents 'scape thine ear;
Viewing those lips, thou still may'st make pretence
To judge of what she says, and swear 't is sense:
Cloth'd with such grace, with such expression fraught,
They move in meaning, and they pause in thought!
But dost thou farther watch, with charm'd surprise,
The mild irresolution of her eyes,
Curious to mark how frequent they repose,
In brief eclipse and momentary close —
Ah! seest thou not an ambush'd Cupid there,
Too tim'rous of his charge, with jealous care
Veils and unveils those beams of heav'nly light,
Too full, too fatal else, for mortal sight?
Nor yet, such pleasing vengeance fond to meet,
In pard'ning dimples hope a safe retreat.
What though her peaceful breast should ne'er allow
Subduing frowns to arm her alter'd brow,
By Love, I swear, and by his gentle wiles,
More fatal still the mercy of her smiles!
Thus lovely, thus adorn'd, possessing all
Of bright or fair that can to woman fall,
The height of vanity might well be thought
Prerogative in her, and Nature's fault.
Yet gentle *Amoret*, in mind supreme
As well as charms, rejects the vainer theme;

And half mistrustful of her beauty's store,
She barbs with wit those darts too keen before: —
Read in all knowledge that her sex should reach,
Though *Greville*, or the *Muse*, should deign to teach,
Fond to improve, nor tim'rous to discern
How far it is a woman's grace to learn;
In *Millar's* dialect she would not prove
Apollo's priestess, but Apollo's love,
Graced by those signs, which truth delights to own,
The timid blush, and mild submitted tone:
Whate'er she says, though sense appear throughout,
Displays the tender hue of female doubt;
Deck'd with that charm, how lovely wit appears,
How graceful *science*, when that robe she wears!

96. **Greville.** Mrs. Fulke Greville, mother of Mrs. Crewe. To her Sheridan dedicated *The Critic* and a manuscript book of poems. Mrs. Greville wrote some verse, including a political *Ode to Indifference*.

99. **Millar.** Lady Millar (or Miller), the rather vulgar, somewhat affected lion-hunting hostess at literary assemblies at her house in Bath. She was nicknamed "Calliope" and "Sappho" and is amusingly described by Horace Walpole and Frances Burney. Contemporary verses describing her house and entertainments contain these lines: —

> "See how they hurry to that hallowed shrine —
> That sacred seat of Sappho and the Nine,
> Where placed on quarries of the purest stone
> The red brick shines unrivalled and alone.
> Bless us! What toil, what cost has been bestowed
> To give that prospect of the London Road.
> Our admiration knows not where to fix,
> *Here* a cascade and *there* a coach and six.
> Within a mystic vase with laurel crowned,
> Hence, ye profane! 'T is consecrated ground.
> Here Sappho's hands the last sad rites dispense
> To mangle poetry and murder sense."

Sheridan was an occasional guest, and may have received from her some slight inspiration for Mrs. Malaprop in *The Rivals*.

Consult Tinker's *The Salon and English Literature*.

Such too her talents, and her bent of mind,
As speak a sprightly heart by thought refined,
A taste for mirth, by contemplation school'd,
A turn for ridicule, by candour ruled,
A scorn of folly, which she tries to hide;
An awe of talent, which she owns with pride!
  Peace! idle Muse, no more thy strain prolong,
But yield a theme, thy warmest praises wrong;
Just to her merit, though thou canst not raise
Thy feeble voice, behold th' acknowledged praise
Has spread conviction through the envious train,
And cast a fatal gloom o'er Scandal's reign!
And lo! each pallid hag, with blister'd tongue,
Mutters assent to all thy zeal has sung —
Owns all the colours just — the outline true;
Thee my inspirer, and my *model* — CREWE!

PROLOGUE

WRITTEN BY MR. GARRICK

A SCHOOL for Scandal! tell me, I beseech you,
Needs there a school this modish art to teach you?
No need of lessons now, the knowing think;
We might as well be taught to eat and drink.
Caused by a dearth of scandal, should the vapours
Distress our fair ones — let them read the papers;

Mr. Garrick. David Garrick (1717–79). The famous actor and manager of Drury Lane. He was the intimate friend of Dr. Johnson and a member of the Literary Club. Sheridan doubtless owed much in the technicalities of his plays to Garrick. At Garrick's funeral, Sheridan was chief mourner; and he shortly afterwards wrote a monody to Garrick's memory which was recited at Drury Lane Theatre.

5. **the vapours:** a term rather loosely used, but applied properly to some form of hysteria. " This disease, then, called Vapours or hysteric affections in Women and the Spleen in Men," was so named because it was formerly supposed to have been caused by " Clouds of Fumes and dark vapours " which ascended " through the bowels into the thorax, heart case, throat, and the brain." (A. C. Garratt's *Myths in Medicine*, quoting from *The Spleen and Vapours*, by Sir Richard Blackmore, London, 1725.)

" There is a more transient species of Vapours, which very commonly seizes young and temperate persons . . .which affects with Disgust of everything that used to amuse or please them; a certain Tediousness of Life, a Lowness of Spirits, with languor, Restlessness, Heaviness, or Anxiety, and an Aversion to Exercise either of the mind or body, and sometimes with violent headaches, or dimness of sight; which symptoms, as they will come on without apparent Cause, so will they go off as unaccountably in short time. . . . " (Quoted by Garratt from *Works* of George Cheyne, London, 1730.)

Their powerful mixtures such disorders hit;
Crave what you will — there's *quantum sufficit.*
"Lord!" cries my Lady *Wormwood* (who loves tattle,
And puts much salt and pepper in her prattle),
Just ris'n at noon, all night at cards when threshing
Strong tea and scandal — "Bless me, how refreshing!
"Give me the papers, *Lisp* — how bold and free! (*sips*)
"*Last night Lord L.* (*sips*) *was caught with Lady D.*
"For aching heads what charming *sal volatile!* (*sips.*)
"*If Mrs. B. will still continue flirting,*
"*We hope she'll* DRAW, *or we'll* UNDRAW *the curtain.*
"Fine satire, poz — in public all abuse it,
"But, by ourselves (*sips*), our praise we can't refuse it.
"Now, *Lisp*, read you — there, at that dash and star."
"Yes, ma'am — *A certain lord had best beware,*
"*Who lives not twenty miles from Grosvenor Square;*
"*For should he Lady W. find willing,*
"*Wormwood is bitter*" — "Oh, that's me, the villain!
"Throw it behind the fire, and never more
"Let that vile paper come within my door."
Thus at our friends we laugh, who feel the dart;
To reach our feelings, we ourselves must smart.

8. **quantum sufficit:** "as much as is sufficient," or "enough."

15. **sal volatile:** smelling-salts; or, an aromatic medicine.

18. **poz:** slang for "positively." See *The Spectator*, No. 135.

20. **dash and star.** These symbols were commonly substituted for some of the letters in the names of the ladies and gentlemen figuring in the intrigues alluded to in the papers. Sometimes merely the initials of a name were used, as suggested by the allusion "A.B. at the coffee-house" (page 123). See also note on "the paragraphs" page 11.

22. **Grosvenor Square.** Then one of the fashionable residence sections of London, east of Hyde Park.

Is our young bard so young, to think that he
Can stop the full spring-tide of calumny?
Knows he the world so little, and its trade?
Alas! the devil 's sooner raised than laid.
So strong, so swift, the monster there 's no gagging:
Cut Scandal's head off, still the tongue is wagging.
Proud of your smiles once lavishly bestow'd,
Again our young Don Quixote takes the road;
To show his gratitude he draws his pen,
And seeks this hydra, Scandal, in his den.
For your applause all perils he would through —
He 'll fight — that 's write — a cavalliero true,
Till every drop of blood — that 's ink — is spilt for you.

36. **Don Quixote.** The allusion is appropriate in view of the parallel between Sheridan's ridicule of sentimental comedy, and Cervantes's ridicule of the romances of chivalry.

40. **cavalliero:** cavalier; "one who has the spirit or bearing of a knight." (Century Dictionary.)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

AS ORIGINALLY ACTED AT DRURY LANE THEATRE, MAY 8, 1777

Sir Peter Teazle	Mr. KING.
Sir Oliver Surface	Mr. YATES.
Joseph Surface	Mr. PALMER.
Charles	Mr. SMITH.
Crabtree	Mr. PARSONS.
Sir Benjamin Backbite	Mr. DODD.
Rowley	Mr. AICKIN.
Moses	Mr. BADDELEY.
Trip	Mr. LAMASH.
Snake	Mr. PACKER.
Careless	Mr. FARREN.
Sir Harry Bumper	Mr. GAWDRY.
Lady Teazle	Mrs. ABINGTON.
Maria	Miss P. HOPKINS.
Lady Sneerwell	Miss SHERRY.
Mrs. Candour	Miss POPE.

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

ACT I

Scene I. Lady Sneerwell's *House.*

Discovered Lady Sneerwell *at the dressing-table;* Snake *drinking chocolate.*

Lady Sneer. The paragraphs, you say, Mr. Snake, were all inserted?

Snake. They were, madam; and as I copied them myself in a feigned hand, there can be no suspicion whence they came.

Lady Sneer. Did you circulate the report of Lady Brittle's intrigue with Captain Boastall?

1. **The paragraphs.** In Sheridan's *The Critic*, Puff has a speech which, though a burlesque, gives a very accurate idea, not alone of the phrasing, but also of the nature of these paragraphs. He says: "In a matter of Gallantry now — Sir Flimsy Gossimer wishes to be well with Lady Fanny Fete — he applies to me — I open trenches for him with a Paragraph in the Morning Post. 'It is recommended to the beautiful and accomplished Lady F * * * * F — — E to be on her guard against that dangerous character, Sir F — — G; who, however pleasing and insinuating his manners may be, is certainly not remarkable for the *constancy of his Attachments!*' — Here you see Sir Flimsy Gossimer is introduced to the particular notice of Lady Fanny — who perhaps never thought of him before — she finds herself publicly cautioned to avoid him which naturally makes her desirous to see him — the observation of their Acquaintance causes a pretty kind of mutual embarrassment — this produces a sort of sympathy of interest, which if Sir Flimsy is unable to improve effectually he at least gains the credit of having their names mention'd together by a particular set, and in a particular way — which nine times out of ten is the full accomplishment of modern Gallantry."

Snake. That's in as fine a train as your ladyship could wish. In the common course of things, I think it must reach Mrs. Clackitt's ears within four-and- [10 twenty hours; and then, you know, the business is as good as done.

Lady Sneer. Why, truly, Mrs. Clackitt has a very pretty talent, and a great deal of industry.

Snake. True, madam, and has been tolerably [15 successful in her day. To my knowledge she has been the cause of six matches being broken off, and three sons disinherited; of four forced elopements, and as many close confinements; nine separate maintenances, and two divorces. Nay, I have more than once [20 traced her causing a *tête-à-tête* in the *Town and Country Magazine*, when the parties, perhaps, had never seen each other's face before in the course of their lives.

Lady Sneer. She certainly has talents, but her manner is gross. 25

Snake. 'T is very true. She generally designs well, has a free tongue, and a bold invention; but her colouring is too dark, and her outlines often extravagant. She

21. **a Tête-à-tête in the Town and Country Magazine.** The *Town and Country Magazine, or Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction and Entertainment*, was first issued in January, 1769. The *tête-à-têtes* were a series of sketches, accompanied by portraits, whose purpose was to convey "a lively idea of the prevailing beauties, and their most zealous admirers." These papers brought the magazine wide notoriety because of the scandal related about well-known and easily identified men and women. Cf. the allusion to the "Scandalous Magazine" in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, II, 1. Lamb, in his *Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading*, refers to "the old *Town and Country Magazine*, with its amusing *tête-à-tête* pictures — 'The Royal Lover and Lady G——;' 'The Melting Platonic and the old Beau,' — and such-like antiquated scandal." See References and Illustrative Readings, IV.

wants that delicacy of tint, and mellowness of sneer, which distinguishes your ladyship's scandal.

Lady Sneer. You are partial, Snake.

Snake. Not in the least; everybody allows that Lady Sneerwell can do more with a word or a look than many can with the most laboured detail, even when they happen to have a little truth on their side to support it.

Lady Sneer. Yes, my dear Snake; and I am no hypocrite to deny the satisfaction I reap from the success of my efforts. Wounded myself in the early part of my life by the envenomed tongue of slander, I confess I have since known no pleasure equal to the reducing others to the level of my own injured reputation.

Snake. Nothing can be more natural. But, Lady Sneerwell, there is one affair in which you have lately employed me, wherein, I confess, I am at a loss to guess your motives.

Lady Sneer. I conceive you mean with respect to my neighbor, Sir Peter Teazle, and his family?

Snake. I do. Here are two young men, to whom Sir Peter has acted as a kind of guardian since their father's death; the eldest possessing the most amiable character, and universally well spoken of; the youngest, the most dissipated and extravagant young fellow in the kingdom, without friends or character:

29. **delicacy of tint.** "'Tint' was originally 'hint,' and Sheridan did not alter it till his comedy was being rehearsed. It occurs first in his correction of the earliest prompt-book. An English edition, published in Paris in 1789, retains 'hint,' and so the French version, published the same year in London, 'cette touche imperceptible.'" (Sichel.)

the former an avowed admirer of your ladyship, and apparently your favourite; the latter attached to Maria, Sir Peter's ward, and confessedly beloved by her. Now, on the face of these circumstances, it is utterly unaccountable to me, why you, the widow of a city [60 knight, with a good jointure, should not close with the passion of a man of such character and expectations as Mr. Surface; and more so why you should be so uncommonly earnest to destroy the mutual attachment subsisting between his brother Charles and Maria. [65

Lady Sneer. Then at once to unravel this mystery, I must inform you, that love has no share whatever in the intercourse between Mr. Surface and me.

Snake. No!

Lady Sneer. His real attachment is to Maria, or [70 her fortune; but finding in his brother a favoured rival, he has been obliged to mask his pretensions, and profit by my assistance.

Snake. Yet still I am more puzzled why you should interest yourself in his success. 75

Lady Sneer. How dull you are! Cannot you surmise the weakness which I hitherto, through shame, have concealed even from you? Must I confess that Charles, that libertine, that extravagant, that bankrupt in fortune and reputation, that he it is for [80

61. jointure. Property settled upon a woman at the time of her marriage, and, after the death of her husband, enjoyed by her for life.

61. close with: yield to; agree to.

80–82. he it is . . . to gain whom I would sacrifice everything. " As it now stands, this intimation of her ladyship's purpose is far too important for anything that follows, and is apt to mystify the spectator, who finds little in the after scenes to justify it — a conclusion at once explained when we are made

whom I'm thus anxious and malicious, and to gain whom I would sacrifice everything?

Snake. Now, indeed, your conduct appears consistent; but how came you and Mr. Surface so confidential?

Lady Sneer. For our mutual interest. I have found him out a long time since. I know him to be artful, selfish, and malicious; in short, a sentimental knave; while with Sir Peter, and indeed with all his acquaintance, he passes for a youthful miracle of prudence, good sense, and benevolence.

Snake. Yes; yet Sir Peter vows he has not his equal in England; and above all, he praises him as a man of sentiment.

Lady Sneer. True; and with the assistance of his sentiment and hypocrisy, he has brought Sir Peter entirely into his interest with regard to Maria; while poor Charles has no friend in the house, though, I fear, he has a powerful one in Maria's heart, against whom we must direct our schemes.

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. Mr. Surface.

Lady Sneer. Show him up. [*Exit* SERVANT.

Enter JOSEPH SURFACE.

Joseph S. My dear Lady Sneerwell, how do you do to-day? Mr. Snake, your most obedient.

Lady Sneer. Snake has just been rallying me on

aware that this was the original *motif* of the entire piece, the object of which was to separate, not Charles Surface, but a sentimental hero called Clerimont, Florival, and other pastoral names, from the Maria whom he loves, and who is the ward, niece, or even stepdaughter of Lady Sneerwell, a beautiful widow and leader of scandal, who loves him." (Mrs. Oliphant.)

our mutual attachment; but I have informed him of our real views. You know how useful he has been to us, and, believe me, the confidence is not ill placed.

Joseph S. Madam, it is impossible for me to suspect a man of Mr. Snake's sensibility and discernment. [110

Lady Sneer. Well, well, no compliments now; but tell me when you saw your mistress, Maria; or, what is more material to me, your brother.

Joseph S. I have not seen either since I left you; but I can inform you that they never meet. Some [115 of your stories have taken a good effect on Maria.

Lady Sneer. Ah! my dear Snake! the merit of this belongs to you; but do your brother's distresses increase?

Joseph S. Every hour. I am told he has had an- [120 other execution in the house yesterday. In short, his dissipation and extravagance exceed anything I have ever heard of.

Lady Sneer. Poor Charles!

Joseph S. True, madam; notwithstanding his [125 vices, one can't help feeling for him. Poor Charles! I'm sure I wish it were in my power to be of any essential service to him; for the man who does not share in the distresses of a brother, even though merited by his own misconduct, deserves —— 130

Lady Sneer. O Lud! you are going to be moral, and forget that you are among friends.

Joseph S. Egad, that's true! I'll keep that senti-

118. **distresses:** legal seizures of goods not paid for. The word is sometimes punned upon in this comedy. (Tatlock.) See below, II, ii, 258; III, i, 14, 61, 190; III, ii, 36; and V, i, 15.

121. **execution:** " the seizure of the goods of a debtor in default of payment." (Murray, *A New English Dictionary.*)

ment till I see Sir Peter; however, it certainly is a charity to rescue Maria from such a libertine, who, if he is to be reclaimed, can be so only by a person of your ladyship's superior accomplishments and understanding.

Snake. I believe, Lady Sneerwell, here's company coming; I'll go and copy the letter I mentioned to you. Mr. Surface, your most obedient.

[*Exit* SNAKE.

Joseph S. Sir, your very devoted. Lady Sneerwell, I am very sorry you have put any further confidence in that fellow.

Lady Sneer. Why so?

Joseph S. I have lately detected him in frequent conference with old Rowley, who was formerly my father's steward, and has never, you know, been a friend of mine.

Lady Sneer. And do you think he would betray us?

Joseph S. Nothing more likely; take my word for 't, Lady Sneerwell, that fellow has n't virtue enough to be faithful even to his own villany. Ah! Maria!

Enter MARIA.

Lady Sneer. Maria, my dear, how do you do? What's the matter?

Maria. Oh! there is that disagreeable lover of mine, Sir Benjamin Backbite, has just called at my guardian's, with his odious uncle, Crabtree; so I slipped out, and ran hither to avoid them.

Lady Sneer. Is that all?

Joseph S. If my brother Charles had been of the party, madam, perhaps you would not have been so much alarmed.

Lady Sneer. Nay, now you are severe; for I [165 dare swear the truth of the matter is, Maria heard *you* were here. But, my dear, what has Sir Benjamin done, that you would avoid him so?

Maria. Oh, he has done nothing; but 't is for what he has said: his conversation is a perpetual libel [170 on all his acquaintance.

Joseph S. Ay, and the worst of it is, there is no advantage in not knowing him; for he'll abuse a stranger just as soon as his best friend; and his uncle's as bad. 175

Lady Sneer. Nay, but we should make allowance; Sir Benjamin is a wit and a poet.

Maria. For my part, I confess, madam, wit loses its respect with me, when I see it in company with malice. What do you think, Mr. Surface? 180

Joseph S. Certainly, madam; to smile at the jest which plants a thorn in another's breast is to become a principal in the mischief.

Lady Sneer. Pshaw! there's no possibility of being witty without a little ill nature: the malice of a [185 good thing is the barb that makes it stick. What's your opinion, Mr. Surface?

Joseph S. To be sure, madam; that conversation, where the spirit of raillery is suppressed, will ever appear tedious and insipid. 190

Maria. Well, I'll not debate how far scandal may be allowable; but in a man, I am sure, it is always contemptible. We have pride, envy, rivalship, and a thousand motives to depreciate each other; but the male slanderer must have the cowardice of a wo- [195 man before he can traduce one.

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. Madam, Mrs. Candour is below, and if your ladyship 's at leisure, will leave her carriage.

Lady Sneer. Beg her to walk in. [*Exit* SERVANT.] Now, Maria, here is a character to your taste; for though [200 Mrs. Candour is a little talkative, everybody allows her to be the best natured and best sort of woman.

Maria. Yes, with a very gross affectation of good nature and benevolence, she does more mischief than the direct malice of old Crabtree. 205

Joseph S. I'faith that 's true, Lady Sneerwell: whenever I hear the current running against the characters of my friends, I never think them in such danger as when Candour undertakes their defence.

Lady Sneer. Hush! here she is! 210

Enter MRS. CANDOUR.

Mrs. Can. My dear Lady Sneerwell, how have you been this century? Mr. Surface, what news do you hear? though indeed it is no matter, for I think one hears nothing else but scandal.

Joseph S. Just so, indeed, ma'am. 215

Mrs. Can. Oh, Maria! child, what, is the whole affair off between you and Charles? His extravagance, I presume; the town talks of nothing else.

Maria. Indeed! I am very sorry, ma'am, the town is not better employed. 220

Mrs. Can. True, true, child; but there 's no stopping people's tongues. I own I was hurt to hear it, as I indeed was to learn, from the same quarter, that your guardian, Sir Peter, and Lady Teazle have not agreed lately as well as could be wished. 225

Maria. 'T is strangely impertinent for people to busy themselves so.

Mrs. Can. Very true, child; but what's to be done? People will talk; there's no preventing it. Why, it was but yesterday I was told Miss Gadabout had [230 eloped with Sir Filigree Flirt. But, Lord! there's no minding what one hears; though, to be sure, I had this from very good authority.

Maria. Such reports are highly scandalous.

Mrs. Can. So they are, child; shameful! shame- [235 ful! But the world is so censorious, no character escapes. Lord, now who would have suspected your friend, Miss Prim, of an indiscretion? Yet such is the ill-nature of people, that they say her uncle stopped her last week, just as she was stepping into the [240 York diligence with her dancing-master.

Maria. I'll answer for't there are no grounds for that report.

Mrs. Can. Ah, no foundation in the world, I dare swear: no more, probably, than for the story circu- [245 lated last month, of Mrs. Festino's affair with Colonel Cassino; though, to be sure, that matter was never rightly cleared up.

Joseph S. The licence of invention some people take is monstrous indeed. 250

Maria. 'T is so; but, in my opinion, those who report such things are equally culpable.

Mrs. Can. To be sure they are; tale-bearers are as bad as the tale-makers; 't is an old observation, and a very true one. But what's to be done, as I said be- [255 fore? How will you prevent people from talking? To-day, Mrs. Clackitt assured me, Mr. and Mrs. Honeymoon were at last become mere man and wife, like the rest of their acquaintance. She likewise hinted that a

241. **York diligence**: the stage-coach running to York.

certain widow, in the next street, had got rid of her dropsy and recovered her shape in a most surprising manner. And at the same time, Miss Tattle, who was by, affirmed that Lord Buffalo had discovered his lady at a house of no extraordinary fame; and that Sir H. Boquet and Tom Saunter were to measure swords on a similar provocation. But, Lord, do you think I would report these things? No, no! tale-bearers, as I said before, are just as bad as the tale-makers.

Joseph S. Ah Mrs. Candour, if everybody had your forbearance and good-nature!

Mrs. Can. I confess, Mr. Surface, I cannot bear to hear people attacked behind their backs; and when ugly circumstances come out against our acquaintance, I own I always love to think the best. By-the-bye, I hope 't is not true that your brother is absolutely ruined?

Joseph S. I am afraid his circumstances are very bad indeed, ma'am.

Mrs. Can. Ah! I heard so; but you must tell him to keep up his spirits; everybody almost is in the same way — Lord Spindle, Sir Thomas Splint, Captain Quinze, and Mr. Nickit — all up, I hear, within this week; so if Charles is undone, he'll find half his acquaintance ruined too, and that, you know, is a consolation.

Joseph S. Doubtless, ma'am; a very great one.

282. **all up:** ruined. Perhaps "posted," in the *Gazette*, an official paper, published twice a week in London, Edinburgh, and Dublin, containing the names of bankrupts, public notices, etc. Cf. also the slang expression, "All 's up (or up with) = everything is lost, ruin stares one in the face." (*Slang and its Analogues*, by Farmer and Henley.)

Enter Servant.

Serv. Mr. Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite.

[*Exit* Servant.

Lady Sneer. So, Maria, you see your lover pursues you; positively you sha'n't escape.

Enter Crabtree *and* Sir Benjamin Backbite.

Crabt. Lady Sneerwell, I kiss your hand. Mrs. Candour, I don't believe you are acquainted with my nephew, Sir Benjamin Backbite? Egad! ma'am, he has a pretty wit, and is a pretty poet too; is n't he, Lady Sneerwell?

Sir Benj. B. O fie, uncle!

Crabt. Nay, egad, it's true; I back him at a rebus or a charade against the best rhymer in the kingdom. Has your ladyship heard the epigram he wrote last week on Lady Frizzle's feather catching fire? Do, Benjamin, repeat it, or the charade you made last night extempore at Mrs. Drowzie's conversazione.

301. **conversazione.** Professor Tinker, in *The Salon and English Literature*, says: " A familiar representation of the levee is found at the opening of *The School for Scandal*, where Lady Sneerwell is ' discovered ' at her toilet. When this scene is correctly represented on the stage, the lady's guests are shown as drinking chocolate at her levee, and there characteristically displaying their conversational gifts. . . . Although this play is not an adequate criticism of the literary drawing-room, it does nevertheless preserve prominent aspects of it." As illustrating the conversazione's inevitable use of scandal and gossip as " short cuts to cleverness," Professor Tinker cites Act II, Scene ii; and as instances of the " neatly turned sentiment that the salon sought to stimulate," he refers to " Sir Benjamin Backbite, his impromptu verses on Lady Frizzle's feather catching fire, his rebuses, the charade which he made at Mrs. Drowsie's conversazione, and, above all, that sprightly conceit on Lady Betty Curricle's ponies." Sir Benjamin, by the way, is a good example of the macaroni. See page 38.

Come now; your first is the name of a fish, your second a great naval commander, and ——

Sir Benj. B. Uncle, now — pr'ythee ——

Crabt. I' faith, ma'am, 't would surprise you to hear how ready he is at all these fine sort of things.

Lady Sneer. I wonder, Sir Benjamin, you never publish anything.

Sir Benj. B. To say truth, ma'am, 't is very vulgar to print; and as my little productions are mostly satires and lampoons on particular people, I find they circulate more by giving copies in confidence to the friends of the parties. However, I have some love elegies, which, when favoured with this lady's smiles, I mean to give the public.

Crabt. 'Fore heaven, ma'am, they'll immortalize you! You will be handed down to posterity, like Petrarch's Laura, or Waller's Sacharissa.

Sir Benj. B. Yes, madam, I think you will like them, when you shall see them on a beautiful quarto page, where a neat rivulet of text shall meander through a meadow of margin. 'Fore Gad, they will be the most elegant things of their kind!

Crabt. But, ladies, that's true. Have you heard the news?

318. **Petrarch's Laura.** In his *Rime*, or sequence of love sonnets, Petrarch, the Italian poet (1304–74), addressed Laura de Noves, the wife of Hugues de Sade of Avignon. Cf. Byron's *Don Juan*: —

> "Think you, if Laura had been Petrarch's wife,
> He would have written sonnets all his life?"

318. **Waller's Sacharissa.** Edmund Waller (1606–87) in paying poetic court to Dorothy Sidney, eldest daughter of the Duke of Leicester, gave her this name. She married Henry Spencer, first Earl of Sunderland.

Mrs. Can. What, sir, do you mean the report of——

Crabt. No, ma'am, that's not it. Miss Nicely is going to be married to her own footman.

Mrs. Can. Impossible!

Crabt. Ask Sir Benjamin.

Sir Benj. B. 'T is very true, ma'am; everything is fixed, and the wedding liveries bespoke.

Crabt. Yes; and they do say there were pressing reasons for it.

Lady Sneer. Why I have heard something of this before.

Mrs. Can. It can't be, and I wonder any one should believe such a story, of so prudent a lady as Miss Nicely.

Sir Benj. B. O Lud! ma'am, that's the very reason 't was believed at once. She has always been so cautious and so reserved, that everybody was sure there was some reason for it at bottom.

Mrs. Can. Why, to be sure, a tale of scandal is as fatal to the credit of a prudent lady of her stamp, as a fever is generally to those of the strongest constitutions. But there is a sort of puny, sickly reputation, that is always ailing, yet will outlive the robuster characters of a hundred prudes.

Sir Benj. B. True, madam, there are valetudinarians in reputation as well as constitution; who, being conscious of their weak part, avoid the least breath of air, and supply their want of stamina by care and circumspection.

Mrs. Can. Well, but this may be all a mistake. You know, Sir Benjamin, very trifling circumstances often give rise to the most injurious tales.

Crabt. That they do, I'll be sworn, ma'am. Did

you ever hear how Miss Piper came to lose her lover and her character last summer at Tunbridge? Sir Benjamin, you remember it?

Sir Benj. B. Oh, to be sure! The most whimsical circumstance.

Lady Sneer. How was it, pray?

Crabt. Why, one evening, at Mrs. Ponto's assembly, the conversation happened to turn on the breeding Nova Scotia sheep in this country. Says a young lady in company, I have known instances of it, for Miss Letitia Piper, a first cousin of mine, had a Nova Scotia sheep that produced her twins. What! cries the Lady Dowager Dundizzy (who you know is as deaf as a post), has Miss Piper had twins? This mistake, as you may imagine, threw the whole company into a fit of laughter. However, 't was the next morning everywhere reported, and in a few days believed by the whole town, that Miss Letitia Piper had actually been brought to bed of a fine boy and a girl; and in less than a week there were some people who could name the father, and the farmhouse where the babies were put to nurse.

Lady Sneer. Strange, indeed!

Crabt. Matter of fact, I assure you. O Lud! Mr. Surface, pray is it true that your uncle, Sir Oliver, is coming home?

Joseph S. Not that I know of, indeed, sir.

Crabt. He has been in the East Indies a long time. You can scarcely remember him, I believe? Sad comfort whenever he returns, to hear how your brother has gone on!

360. **Tunbridge.** Tunbridge Wells, a pleasure resort some thirty-five miles southeast of London.

Joseph S. Charles has been imprudent, sir, to [390 be sure; but I hope no busy people have already prejudiced Sir Oliver against him. He may reform.

Sir Benj. B. To be sure he may; for my part, I never believed him to be so utterly void of principle as people say; and though he has lost all his friends, [395 I am told nobody is better spoken of by the Jews.

Crabt. That's true, egad, nephew. If the Old Jewry was a ward, I believe Charles would be an alderman. No man more popular there, 'fore Gad! I hear he pays as many annuities as the Irish tontine; [400 and that whenever he is sick, they have prayers for the recovery of his health in all the synagogues.

Sir Benj. B. Yet no man lives in greater splendour. They tell me, when he entertains his friends he will

397. **Old Jewry:** a London street, near the Bank of England; so named from the synagogue which stood here prior to the persecution of the Jews in 1291. (Baedeker.)

400. **Irish Tontine.** In 1773, a bill to tax the rents of absentee proprietors was introduced in the Irish Parliament, but met defeat. The failure of this bill, says Lecky, made it "imperatively necessary to seek new resources; for, between 1763 and 1773 the National Debt had increased from £521,161 to £999,686. In order to meet immediate wants, £565,000 was raised by the method of Tontine Annuities and Stamp Duties." (*A History of England in the Eighteenth Century.*)

The tontine annuities were a method of raising funds for government uses introduced into France about 1653 by Lorenzo Tonti, a Neapolitan banker. Each subscriber received an annuity during his lifetime, proportioned to his subscription and increasing as the number of subscribers was diminished by death. The Government usually permanently retained the principal subscribed. The investment was considered attractive because it held out the hope of a long-continued and eventually a very large return. The English Government formerly raised frequent loans by this method.

sit down to dinner with a dozen of his own secu- [405
rities; have a score of tradesmen waiting in the ante-
chamber, and an officer behind every guest's chair.

Joseph S. This may be entertainment to you, gentle-
men, but you pay very little regard to the feelings
of a brother. 410

Maria. Their malice is intolerable. Lady Sneer-
well, I must wish you a good morning: I'm not very
well. [*Exit* MARIA.

Mrs. Can. O dear! she changes colour very much.

Lady Sneer. Do, Mrs. Candour, follow her: she [415
may want assistance.

Mrs. Can. That I will, with all my soul, ma'am.
Poor dear girl, who knows what her situation may be!
[*Exit* Mrs. CANDOUR.

Lady Sneer. 'T was nothing but that she could not
bear to hear Charles reflected on, notwithstand- [420
ing their difference.

Sir Benj. B. The young lady's *penchant* is obvious.

Crabt. But, Benjamin, you must not give up the
pursuit for that: follow her, and put her into good
humour. Repeat her some of your own verses. [425
Come, I'll assist you.

Sir Benj. B. Mr. Surface, I did not mean to hurt
you; but depend on't your brother is utterly undone.

405. **securities**: persons who had become surety for him to those from whom he had borrowed money.

407. **an officer behind every guest's chair.** The officers responsible for the carrying out of an execution for debt, when once in possession, were not allowed to leave the house containing the property seized or to permit anything to be removed until the debt was paid. In this exercise of their duty, they were sometimes disguised as liveried servants and waited upon the company in that capacity.

Crabt. O Lud, ay! undone as ever man was. Can't raise a guinea!

Sir Benj. B. And everything sold, I'm told, that was movable.

Crabt. I have seen one that was at his house. Not a thing left but some empty bottles that were overlooked, and the family pictures, which I believe [435 are framed in the wainscots.

Sir Benj. B. And I'm very sorry, also, to hear some bad stories against him. [*Going.*

Crabt. Oh! he has done many mean things, that's certain.

Sir Benj. B. But, however, as he's your brother —— [*Going.*

Crabt. We'll tell you all another opportunity.

[*Exit* Crabtree *and* Sir Benjamin.

Lady Sneer. Ha! ha! 't is very hard for them to leave a subject they have not quite run down.

Joseph S. And I believe the abuse was no more [445 acceptable to your ladyship than Maria.

Lady Sneer. I doubt her affections are farther engaged than we imagine. But the family are to be here this evening, so you may as well dine where you are, and we shall have an opportunity of observing [450 farther; in the mean time, I'll go and plot mischief, and you shall study sentiment. [*Exeunt.*

Scene II. Sir Peter's *House.*

Enter Sir Peter.

Sir Peter T. When an old bachelor marries a young wife, what is he to expect? 'T is now six months since

447. doubt: suspect.

Scene II. Sir Peter's House. Of the method of staging a play

Lady Teazle made me the happiest of men; and I have been the most miserable dog ever since! We tifted a little going to church, and fairly quarrelled [5 before the bells had done ringing. I was more than once nearly choked with gall during the honeymoon, and had lost all comfort in life before my friends had done wishing me joy. Yet I chose with caution — a girl bred wholly in the country, who never knew lux- [10 ury beyond one silk gown, nor dissipation above the annual gala of a race ball. Yet now she plays her part in all the extravagant fopperies of the fashion and the town, with as ready a grace as if she had never seen a bush or a grass-plot out of Grosvenor Square! [15 I am sneered at by all my acquaintance, and para-

demanding frequent changes of scene — as practiced at the Drury Lane Theatre — Professor Matthews writes: —

"The proscenium-arch was about seventy feet wide; the stage was about the same depth; and there was an apron of eighteen feet in front of the curtain. The scenery was very much what we are still permitted to see in the present performance of the earlier and simpler Italian operas, — that is to say, there was a drop-scene at the back, and there were on each side, and parallel with the drop, five or six 'wings,' representing trees or columns or side walls. It was through the broad openings between these wings that the performers came out on the stage. The place of the action could be shifted any number of times by merely pushing out half-scenes which met in the middle of the stage, and by sliding back the wings of the first set and sliding forward those of the second.

"This is the method of presentation which allowed Sheridan to put two or three different places into a single act of the *School for Scandal*, and to display his characters first at Lady Sneerwell's and then at Lady Teazle's." (*A Study of the Drama.*)

12. **race-ball**: a ball held as a part of the festivities attendant upon a series of races.

16. **paragraphed in the newspapers.** Cf. *Prologue*, lines 21–24. Also, note to Lady Sneerwell's opening speech, page 11.

graphed in the newspapers. She dissipates my fortune, and contradicts all my humours; yet the worst of it is, I doubt I love her, or I should never bear all this. However, I'll never be weak enough to own it.

Enter Rowley.

Rowley. Oh! Sir Peter, your servant; how is it with you, sir?

Sir Peter T. Very bad, Master Rowley, very bad. I meet with nothing but crosses and vexations.

Rowley. What can have happened to trouble you since yesterday?

Sir Peter T. A good question to a married man!

Rowley. Nay, I'm sure your lady, Sir Peter, can't be the cause of your uneasiness.

Sir Peter T. Why, has anybody told you she was dead?

Rowley. Come, come, Sir Peter, you love her, notwithstanding your tempers don't exactly agree.

Sir Peter T. But the fault is entirely hers, Master Rowley. I am, myself, the sweetest tempered man alive, and hate a teasing temper; and so I tell her a hundred times a day.

Rowley. Indeed!

Sir Peter T. Ay; and what is very extraordinary, in all our disputes she is always in the wrong! But Lady Sneerwell, and the set she meets at her house, encourage the perverseness of her disposition. Then, to complete my vexation, Maria, my ward, whom I ought to have the power over, is determined to turn rebel too, and absolutely refuses the man whom I have long resolved on for her husband; meaning, I suppose, to bestow herself on his profligate brother.

Rowley. You know, Sir Peter, I have always taken the liberty to differ with you on the subject of these two young gentlemen. I only wish you may not be [50 deceived in your opinion of the elder. For Charles, my life on't! he will retrieve his errors yet. Their worthy father, once my honoured master, was, at his years, nearly as wild a spark; yet, when he died, he did not leave a more benevolent heart to lament [55 his loss.

Sir Peter T. You are wrong, Master Rowley. On their father's death, you know, I acted as a kind of guardian to them both, till their uncle Sir Oliver's liberality gave them an early independence: of [60 course, no person could have more opportunities of judging of their hearts, and I was never mistaken in my life. Joseph is indeed a model for the young men of the age. He is a man of sentiment, and acts up to the *sentiments* he professes; but for the other, take my [65 word for't, if he had any grain of virtue by descent, he has dissipated it with the rest of his inheritance. Ah! my old friend, Sir Oliver, will be deeply mortified when he finds how part of his bounty has been misapplied.

Rowley. I am sorry to find you so violent against [70 the young man, because this may be the most critical period of his fortune. I came hither with news that will surprise you.

Sir Peter T. What! let me hear.

Rowley. Sir Oliver *is* arrived, and at this moment [75 in town.

Sir Peter T. How! you astonish me! I thought you did not expect him this month.

Rowley. I did not; but his passage has been remarkably quick. 80

Sir Peter T. Egad, I shall rejoice to see my old friend. 'T is fifteen years since we met. We have had many a day together; but does he still enjoin us not to inform his nephews of his arrival?

Rowley. Most strictly. He means, before it is [85 known, to make some trial of their dispositions.

Sir Peter T. Ah! there needs no art to discover their merits; he shall have his way. But, pray, does he know I am married?

Rowley. Yes, and will soon wish you joy. 90

Sir Peter T. What, as we drink health to a friend in a consumption. Ah! Oliver will laugh at me. We used to rail at matrimony together, and he has been steady to his text. Well, he must be soon at my house, though! I'll instantly give orders for his [95 reception. But, Master Rowley, don't drop a word that Lady Teazle and I ever disagree.

Rowley. By no means.

Sir Peter T. For I should never be able to stand Noll's jokes; so I'd have him think, Lord forgive [100 me! that we are a very happy couple.

Rowley. I understand you; but then you must be very careful not to differ while he is in the house with you.

Sir Peter T. Egad, and so we must, and that's [105 impossible. Ah! Master Rowley, when an old bachelor marries a young wife, he deserves — no — the crime carries its punishment along with it. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II

SCENE I.

Enter Sir PETER *and* Lady TEAZLE.

Sir Peter T. Lady Teazle, Lady Teazle, I'll not bear it!

Lady T. Sir Peter, Sir Peter, you may bear it or not, as you please; but I ought to have my own way in everything, and what's more, I will, too. What! [5 though I was educated in the country, I know very well that women of fashion in London are accountable to nobody after they are married.

Sir Peter T. Very well, ma'am, very well; so a husband is to have no influence, no authority? 10

Lady T. Authority! No, to be sure; if you wanted authority over me, you should have adopted me, and not married me: I am sure you were old enough.

Sir Peter T. Old enough! ay, there it is. Well, well, Lady Teazle, though my life may be made un- [15 happy by your temper, I'll not be ruined by your extravagance.

Lady T. My extravagance! I'm sure I'm not more extravagant than a woman of fashion ought to be.

Sir Peter T. No, no, madam, you shall throw [20 away no more sums on such unmeaning luxury. 'Slife! to spend as much to furnish your dressing-room with flowers in winter as would suffice to turn the Pantheon

23. **Pantheon**: a concert-hall in Oxford Street, London, opened in 1772. Its chief feature was a rotunda promenade room. Johnson thought it inferior to Ranelegh, but Walpole called it "the most beautiful edifice in England." (See Miss Burney's *Evelina*, Letter XXIII, and Wright's *Caricature History of the Georges*, XIV.)

into a green-house, and give a *fête champêtre* at Christmas.

Lady T. And I am to blame, Sir Peter, because flowers are dear in cold weather? You should find fault with the climate, and not with me. For my part, I'm sure, I wish it was spring all the year round, and that roses grew under our feet.

Sir Peter T. Oons! madam; if you had been born to this, I should n't wonder at your talking thus; but you forget what your situation was when I married you.

Lady T. No, no, I don't; 't was a very disagreeable one, or I should never have married you.

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, madam; you were then in somewhat a humbler style: the daughter of a plain country squire. Recollect, Lady Teazle, when I saw you first sitting at your tambour, in a pretty figured linen gown, with a bunch of keys at your side; your [40 hair combed smooth over a roll, and your apartment hung round with fruits in worsted, of your own working.

Lady T. O, yes! I remember it very well, and a curious life I led. My daily occupation to inspect [45 the dairy, superintend the poultry, make extracts from the family receipt book, and comb my aunt Deborah's lap-dog.

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, ma'am,'t was so indeed.

Lady T. And then, you know, my evening [50 amusements! To draw patterns for ruffles, which I had not materials to make up; to play Pope Joan

24. **fête champêtre**: an open-air festival.

39. **tambour**: a frame, usually circular, for holding embroidery.

52. **Pope Joan**: an old game of cards, resembling its modern derivative, Newmarket, or Stop. (*Standard Dictionary.*)

with the curate; to read a sermon to my aunt; or to be stuck down to an old spinet to strum my father to sleep after a fox-chase.

Sir Peter T. I am glad you have so good a memory. Yes, madam, these were the recreations I took you from; but now you must have your coach — *vis-à-vis* — and three powdered footmen before your chair; and in the summer, a pair of white cats to draw you to Kensington Gardens. No recollection, I suppose, when you were content to ride double, behind the butler, on a docked coach-horse?

Lady T. No; I swear I never did that. I deny the butler and the coach-horse.

Sir Peter T. This, madam, was your situation; and what have I done for you? I have made you a woman of fashion, of fortune, of rank; in short, I have made you my wife.

Lady T. Well, then, and there is but one thing more you can make me to add to the obligation, and that is ——

Sir Peter T. My widow, I suppose?

Lady T. Hem! hem!

Sir Peter T. I thank you, madam; but don't flatter yourself; for though your ill conduct may disturb my peace, it shall never break my heart, I promise you; however, I am equally obliged to you for the hint.

Lady T. Then why will you endeavour to make yourself so disagreeable to me, and thwart me in every little elegant expense?

58. **vis-à-vis:** a carriage in which persons sit face to face. (Webster's *New International Dictionary.*)

59. **chair:** a sedan chair.

61. **Kensington Gardens:** a public park in London on the westerly side of Hyde Park, the fashionable drive.

Sir Peter T. 'Slife, madam, I say, had you any of these little elegant expenses when you married me?

Lady T. Lud, Sir Peter! would you have me be [85 out of the fashion?

Sir Peter T. The fashion, indeed! what had you to do with the fashion before you married me?

Lady T. For my part, I should think you would like to have your wife thought a woman of taste. 90

Sir Peter T. Ay, there again; taste! Zounds! madam, you had no taste when you married me!

Lady T. That's very true indeed, Sir Peter; and after having married you, I should never pretend to taste again, I allow. But now, Sir Peter, if we have [95 finished our daily jangle, I presume I may go to my engagement at Lady Sneerwell's.

Sir Peter T. Ah, there's another precious circumstance; a charming set of acquaintance you have made there. 100

Lady T. Nay, Sir Peter, they are all people of rank and fortune, and remarkably tenacious of reputation.

Sir Peter T. Yes, egad, they are tenacious of reputation with a vengeance; for they don't choose any- [105 body should have a character but themselves! Such a crew! Ah! many a wretch has rid on a hurdle who has done less mischief than these utterers of forged tales, coiners of scandal, and clippers of reputation. 110

107. **rid on a hurdle.** The hurdle was the rough cart on which criminals were taken to execution. Counterfeiting or mutilating money was in England at one time punished by death.

109. **clippers of reputation.** "The figure of speech is derived

Lady T. What! would you restrain the freedom of speech?

Sir Peter T. Ah! they have made you just as bad as any one of the society.

Lady T. Why, I believe I do bear a part with a [115 tolerable grace. But I vow I bear no malice against the people I abuse. When I say an ill-natured thing, 't is out of pure good humour; and I take it for granted, they deal exactly in the same manner with me. But, Sir Peter, you know you promised to come to [120 Lady Sneerwell's too.

Sir Peter T. Well, well, I'll call in just to look after my own character.

Lady T. Then indeed you must make haste after me, or you'll be too late. So, good-bye to ye. 125

[*Exit* Lady TEAZLE.

Sir Peter T. So, I have gained much by my intended expostulation; yet, with what a charming air she contradicts everything I say, and how pleasingly she shows her contempt for my authority! Well, though I can't make her love me, there is great [130 satisfaction in quarrelling with her; and I think she never appears to such advantage as when she is doing everything in her power to plague me. [*Exit.*

SCENE II. *At* Lady SNEERWELL'S.

Lady SNEERWELL, Mrs. CANDOUR, CRABTREE, Sir BENJAMIN BACKBITE, *and* JOSEPH SURFACE *discovered.*

Lady Sneer. Nay, positively, we will hear it.

Joseph S. Yes, yes, the epigram, by all means.

Sir Benj. B. O plague on 't, uncle! 't is mere nonsense.

from the practice of clipping the edges of coins, a practice which led to milling the edges to prevent loss." (Nettleton.)

Crabt. No, no; 'fore Gad, very clever for an extempore!

Sir Benj. B. But, ladies, you should be acquainted with the circumstances. You must know, that one day last week, as Lady Betty Curricle was taking the dust in Hyde Park, in a sort of duodecimo phaeton, she desired me to write some verses on her ponies, upon which I took out my pocket-book, and in one moment produced the following: —

Sure never were seen two such beautiful ponies;
Other horses are clowns, but these macaronies:

9. **Hyde Park:** a large park in the western part of London.

9. **duodecimo:** here, diminutive.

14. **macaronies:** a term first used in England about 1760 to designate the fops and exquisites who affected foreign ways. As the Italians considered their dish of macaroni "the *summum bonum* of all good eating, so they figuratively call everything they think elegant and uncommon, 'macaroni.'" "In adopting foreign fashions of dress and affected pronunciations of English words, Englishmen . . . often went to the most extravagant lengths and made themselves the laughing-stock of all sensible people. Young exquisites who had traveled in Italy, and who, as Walpole says, wore 'long curls and spying-glasses,' founded the Macaroni Club, to which no one could be admitted who had not traveled abroad. This club drew in the most representative of the younger men of rank and fashion that used to gather at Brookes's, and they speedily attracted attention by their absurd style of dress and exaggerated foreign manners. Charles James Fox 'led the fashion among the macaronis. After his visit to Italy he and his cousin posted from Paris to Lyons simply in order to choose patterns for their waistcoats; he appeared in London in red-heeled shoes and blue hair-powder, and up to the age of twenty-five, sometimes at least, wore a hat and a feather in the House of Commons.'

"Follies of this sort naturally invited satire. A writer in the 'Oxford Magazine' for June, 1770, says: 'There is indeed a kind of animal, neither male nor female, a thing the neuter gender, lately started up amongst us. It is called a Macaroni. It talks

To give them this title I'm sure can't be wrong,
Their legs are so slim, and their tails are so long.

Crabt. There, ladies, done in the smack of a whip, and on horseback too.

Joseph S. A very Phœbus mounted, indeed, Sir Benjamin.

Sir Benj. B. O dear sir! trifles, trifles.

Enter Lady TEAZLE *and* MARIA.

Mrs. Can. I must have a copy.

Lady Sneer. Lady Teazle, I hope we shall see Sir Peter?

Lady T. I believe he'll wait on your ladyship presently.

Lady Sneer. Maria, my love, you look grave. Come, you shall set down to piquet with Mr. Surface.

Maria. I take very little pleasure in cards; however, I'll do as you please.

Lady T. I am surprised Mr. Surface should sit down with her; I thought he would have embraced this opportunity of speaking to me, before Sir Peter came. [*Aside.*

Mrs. Can. Now, I'll die, but you are so scandalous, I'll forswear your society.

without meaning, it smiles without pleasantry, it eats without appetite, it rides without exercise." (W. E. Mead, in *The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century.*)

In Garrick's *The Male Coquette*, a character, Il Marchese di Macaroni, a sham Italian, was made the means of ridiculing the dandy of the time. In the American Revolution, a body of Maryland troops wearing a rich uniform were called macaroni. Recall also the use of the word in "Yankee Doodle."

16. **Their tails are so long.** The macaronies wore wigs with notoriously long tails.

19. **Phœbus.** Phœbus Apollo was the god of poetry.

Lady T. What's the matter, Mrs. Candour?

Mrs. Can. They'll not allow our friend, Miss Vermilion, to be handsome.

Lady Sneer. O surely she is a pretty woman.

Crabt. I'm very glad you think so, ma'am.

Mrs. Can. She has a charming fresh colour.

Lady T. Yes, when it is fresh put on.

Mrs. Can. O fie! I'll swear her colour is natural; I have seen it come and go.

Lady T. I dare swear you have, ma'am; it goes off at night, and comes again in the morning.

Sir Benj. B. True, ma'am, it not only comes and goes, but what's more, egad! her maid can fetch and carry it.

Mrs. Can. Ha! ha! ha! how I hate to hear you talk so! But surely, now, her sister *is*, or *was*, very handsome.

Crabt. Who? Mrs. Evergreen? O Lord! she's six and fifty if she's an hour.

Mrs. Can. Now positively you wrong her; fifty-two or fifty-three is the utmost; and I don't think she looks more.

Sir Benj. B. Ah! there's no judging by her looks, unless one could see her face.

Lady Sneer. Well, well, if Mrs. Evergreen *does* take some pains to repair the ravages of time, you must allow she effects it with great ingenuity, and surely that's better than the careless manner in which the widow Ochre chalks her wrinkles.

Sir Benj. B. Nay, now, Lady Sneerwell, you are severe upon the widow. Come, come, 't is not that she paints so ill, but when she has finished her face, she joins it so badly to her neck, that she looks like a

mended statue, in which the connoisseur sees at once that the head's modern though the trunk's antique.

Crabt. Ha! ha! ha! well said, nephew.

Mrs. Can. Ha! ha! ha! well, you make me laugh, but I vow I hate you for it. What do you think of Miss Simper?

Sir Benj. B. Why, she has very pretty teeth.

Lady T. Yes, and on that account, when she is neither speaking nor laughing (which very seldom happens), she never absolutely shuts her mouth, but leaves it always on a jar, as it were — thus —

[*Shows her teeth.*

Mrs. Can. How can you be so ill-natured?

Lady T. Nay, I allow even that's better than the pains Mrs. Prim takes to conceal her losses in front. She draws her mouth till it positively resembles the aperture of a poor's box, and all her words appear to slide out edgewise, as it were thus, *How do you do,* [*madam? Yes, madam.*

Lady Sneer. Very well, Lady Teazle; I see you can be a little severe.

Lady T. In defence of a friend it is but justice. But here comes Sir Peter to spoil our pleasantry.

Enter Sir PETER TEAZLE.

Sir Peter T. Ladies, your most obedient. Mercy on me! here is the whole set! a character dead at every word, I suppose. [*Aside.*

92–93. **a character dead at every word, I suppose.** Cf. Pope's "At every word a reputation dies." (*The Rape of the Lock*: III, 16.)

" This scandal scene of Sheridan's had predecessors in the comedies of Congreve and of Wycherley, not to go back as far as the *Misanthrope* of Molière. Hard and cruel as Sheridan's scene now seems to us, it is gentle indeed when contrasted with the cudgel-play of Congreve and Wycherley. It is possible that

Mrs. Can. I am rejoiced you are come, Sir Peter. They have been so censorious; and Lady Teazle as [95 bad as any one.

Sir Peter T. It must be very distressing to *you*, Mrs. Candour, I dare swear.

Mrs. Can. O, they will allow good qualities to nobody; not even good nature to our friend Mrs. [100 Pursy.

Lady T. What, the fat dowager who was at Mrs. Quadrille's last night?

Mrs. Can. Nay, her bulk is her misfortune; and when she takes such pains to get rid of it, you [105 ought not to reflect on her.

Lady Sneer. That's very true, indeed.

Lady T. Yes, I know she almost lives on acids and small whey; laces herself by pullies; and often in the hottest noon in summer, you may see her on a little [110 squat pony, with her hair plaited up behind like a drummer's, and puffing round the Ring on a full trot.

Mrs. Can. I thank you, Lady Teazle, for defending her.

Sir Peter T. Yes, a good defence, truly! 115

Mrs. Can. Truly, Lady Teazle is as censorious as Miss Sallow.

Sheridan owed some of his comparative suavity to the example of Addison, who contributed to No. 17 of *The Spectator*, a 'Fine Lady's Journal,' in which there is a passage of tittle-tattle more like Sheridan than Wycherley or Congreve." (Matthews.)

112. **the Ring.** "Charles II laid out in Hyde Park a drive around an enclosed circle, about three hundred yards in diameter. One set of coaches circled the drive in one direction, and another in the opposite, thus affording the fashionable a chance to exchange greetings." (Nettleton.) It is mentioned in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, in *The Spectator*, in Swift's *Cadenus and Vanessa*, and other eighteenth-century literature.

Crabt. Yes, and she is a curious being to pretend to be censorious — an awkward gawky, without any one good point under heaven.

Mrs. Can. Positively you shall not be so very severe. Miss Sallow is a near relation of mine by marriage, and as for her person, great allowance is to be made; for, let me tell you, a woman labours under many disadvantages who tries to pass for a girl at six-and- [125 thirty.

Lady Sneer. Though, surely, she is handsome still; and for the weakness in her eyes, considering how much she reads by candlelight, it is not to be wondered at.

Mrs. Can. True, and then as to her manner; [130 upon my word I think it is particularly graceful, considering she had never had the least education; for you know her mother was a Welsh milliner, and her father a sugar-baker at Bristol.

Sir Benj. B. Ah! you are both of you too good [135 natured!

Sir Peter T. Yes, damned good natured! This their own relation! mercy on me! [*Aside.*

Mrs. Can. For my part, I own I cannot bear to hear a friend ill spoken of.

Sir Peter T. No, to be sure!

Sir Benj. B. Oh! you are of a moral turn. Mrs. Candour and I can sit for an hour and hear Lady Stucco talk sentiment.

Lady T. Nay, I vow Lady Stucco is very well [145 with the dessert after dinner; for she's just like the French fruits one cracks for mottoes — made up of paint and proverb.

147. **French fruits**: a dinner favor. The context supplies a hint as to the form. In Fraser Rae's *Sheridan's Plays now printed as he wrote them*, the reading is "Spanish" fruit.

Mrs. Can. Well, I never will join in ridiculing a friend; and so I constantly tell my cousin Ogle, [150 and you all know what pretensions she has to be critical on beauty.

Crabt. O to be sure! she has herself the oddest countenance that ever was seen; 't is a collection of features from all the different countries of the globe. 155

Sir Benj. B. So she has, indeed — an Irish front —

Crabt. Caledonian locks —

Sir Benj. B. Dutch nose —

Crabt. Austrian lips —

Sir Benj. B. Complexion of a Spaniard — 160

Crabt. And teeth *à la Chinois.*

Sir Benj. B. In short, her face resembles a *table d'hôte* at Spa, where no two guests are of a nation —

Crabt. Or a congress at the close of a general war — wherein all the members, even to her eyes, appear [165 to have a different interest, and her nose and chin are the only parties likely to join issue.

Mrs. Can. Ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter T. Mercy on my life! — a person they dine with twice a week. [*Aside.* [170

Lady Sneer. Go, go; you are a couple of provoking toads.

155. **from all the different countries of the globe.** Cf. Portia's description of her suitor, Falconbridge, "the young baron of England." (*Merchant of Venice*, I, ii, 66.) "How oddly is he suited! I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany, and his behaviour everywhere." (Brown.)

157. **Caledonian:** Scotch: i.e., red.

161. **à la Chinois:** Chinese: i.e., black.

163. **Spa.** "The oldest, and formerly one of the best-known of the large European watering-places, just across the German border, in the province of Liège, Belgium." (J. Q. Adams, Jr.)

Mrs. Can. Nay, but I vow you shall not carry the laugh off so; for give me leave to say that Mrs. Ogle ——

Sir Peter T. Madam, madam, I beg your pardon; there's no stopping these good gentlemen's tongues. But when I tell you, Mrs. Candour, that the lady they are abusing is a particular friend of mine, I hope you'll not take her part.

Lady Sneer. Ha! ha! ha! Well said, Sir Peter! But you are a cruel creature — too phlegmatic yourself for a jest, and too peevish to allow wit in others.

Sir Peter T. Ah! madam, true wit is more nearly allied to good-nature than your ladyship is aware of. [

Lady T. True, Sir Peter. I believe they are so near akin that they can never be united.

Sir Benj. B. Or rather, madam, suppose them to be man and wife, because one seldom sees them together.

Lady T. But Sir Peter is such an enemy to scan- [dal, I believe he would have it put down by Parliament.

Sir Peter T. 'Fore heaven, madam, if they were to consider the sporting with reputation of as much importance as poaching on manors, and pass an Act for the preservation of fame, I believe there are many [would thank them for the bill.

Lady Sneer. O Lud! Sir Peter; would you deprive us of our privileges?

Sir Peter T. Ay, madam; and then no person should be permitted to kill characters and run down [

186. **so near akin that they can never be united.** Brown suggests comparison with Butler's *Hudibras*, III, i, 1293–96: —

> "'Cause grace and virtue are within
> Prohibited degrees of kin:
> And therefore no true saint allows
> They shall be suffered to espouse."

reputations, but qualified old maids and disappointed widows.

Lady Sneer. Go, you monster!

Mrs. Can. But, surely, you would not be quite so severe on those who only report what they hear? [205

Sir Peter T. Yes, madam, I would have law merchant for them too; and in all cases of slander currency, whenever the drawer of the lie was not to be found, the injured parties should have a right to come on any of the indorsers. 210

Crabt. Well, for my part, I believe there never was a scandalous tale without some foundation.

Sir Peter T. O, nine out of ten of the malicious inventions are founded on some ridiculous misrepresentation. 215

Lady Sneer. Come, ladies, shall we sit down to cards in the next room?

Enter a Servant, *who whispers* Sir Peter.

Sir Peter T. I'll be with them directly. I'll get away unperceived. [*Apart.*

Lady Sneer. Sir Peter, you are not going to [220 leave us?

Sir Peter T. Your ladyship must excuse me; I'm called away by particular business. But I leave my character behind me. [*Exit* Sir Peter.

Sir Benj. B. Well; certainly, Lady Teazle, that [225 lord of yours is a strange being; I could tell you some stories of him would make you laugh heartily if he were not your husband.

Lady T. O, pray don't mind that; come, do let's hear them. 230

[*Joins the rest of the company going into the next room.*

206. **law merchant:** mercantile law.

Joseph S. Maria, I see you have no satisfaction in this society.

Maria. How is it possible I should? If to raise malicious smiles at the infirmities or misfortunes of those who have never injured us be the province [235 of wit or humour, Heaven grant me a double portion of dulness!

Joseph S. Yet they appear more ill-natured than they are; they have no malice at heart.

Maria. Then is their conduct still more con- [240 temptible; for, in my opinion, nothing could excuse the interference of their tongues, but a natural and uncontrollable bitterness of mind.

Joseph S. Undoubtedly, madam; and it has always been a sentiment of mine, that to propagate a ma- [245 licious truth wantonly is more despicable than to falsify from revenge. But can you, Maria, feel thus for others, and be unkind to me alone? Is hope to be denied the tenderest passion?

Maria. Why will you distress me by renewing [250 the subject?

Joseph S. Ah, Maria! you would not treat me thus, and oppose your guardian, Sir Peter's will, but that I see that profligate Charles is still a favoured rival.

Maria. Ungenerously urged! But whatever [255 my sentiments are for that unfortunate young man, be assured I shall not feel more bound to give him up, because his distresses have lost him the regard even of a brother.

Joseph S. Nay, but Maria, do not leave me [260 with a frown; by all that's honest, I swear [*kneels*] ——

Re-enter Lady TEAZLE, *behind.*

[*Aside.*] Gad's life, here's Lady Teazle! [*Aloud to*

Maria] You must not; no, you shall not; for, though I have the greatest regard for Lady Teazle ——

Maria. Lady Teazle!

Joseph S. Yet were Sir Peter to suspect ——

Lady T. [*Coming forward.*] What is this, pray? Do you take her for me? Child, you are wanted in the next room. [*Exit* Maria.] What is all this, pray?

Joseph S. O, the most unlucky circumstance in nature! Maria has somehow suspected the tender concern I had for your happiness, and threatened to acquaint Sir Peter with her suspicions, and I was just endeavouring to reason with her when you came in.

Lady T. Indeed! but you seemed to adopt a very tender mode of reasoning; do you usually argue on your knees?

Joseph S. O, she's a child, and I thought a little bombast —— But Lady Teazle, when are you to give me your judgment on my library, as you promised?

Lady T. No, no; I begin to think it would be imprudent, and you know I admit you as a lover no farther than fashion sanctions.

Joseph S. True, a mere platonic cicisbeo — what every wife is entitled to.

Lady T. Certainly, one must not be out of the fashion. However, I have so much of my country prejudices left, that, though Sir Peter's ill-humour may vex me ever so, it never shall provoke me to ——

Joseph S. The only revenge in your power. Well; I applaud your moderation.

Lady T. Go; you are an insinuating wretch. But we shall be missed; let us join the company.

284. **cicisbeo**: an Italian word, meaning the recognized gallant of a married woman. (Webster's *New International Dictionary.*)

Joseph S. But we had best not return together.

Lady T. Well, don't stay; for Maria sha'n't [295 come to hear any more of your reasoning, I promise you. [*Exit* LADY TEAZLE.

Joseph S. A curious dilemma my politics have run me into! I wanted, at first, only to ingratiate myself with Lady Teazle, that she might not be my enemy [300 with Maria; and I have, I don't know how, become her serious lover. Sincerely I begin to wish I had never made such a point of gaining so very good a character, for it has led me into so many cursed rogueries that I doubt I shall be exposed at last. 305 [*Exit.*

SCENE III. Sir PETER TEAZLE'S.

Enter ROWLEY *and* Sir OLIVER SURFACE.

Sir Oliver S. Ha! ha! ha! So my old friend is married, hey? a young wife out of the country. Ha! ha! ha! that he should have stood bluff to old bachelor so long, and sink into a husband at last.

Rowley. But you must not rally him on the sub- [5 ject, Sir Oliver; 't is a tender point, I assure you, though he has been married only seven months.

Sir Oliver S. Then he has been just half a year on the stool of repentance! Poor Peter! But you say he has entirely given up Charles; never sees him, hey? [10

Rowley. His prejudice against him is astonishing, and I am sure greatly increased by a jealousy of him with Lady Teazle, which he has industriously been led into by a scandalous society in the neighbourhood, who have contributed not a little to Charles's [15 ill name. Whereas the truth is, I believe, if the lady is partial to either of them, his brother is the favourite.

Sir Oliver S. Ay, I know there is a set of malicious, prating, prudent gossips, both male and female, who murder characters to kill time; and will rob a young fellow of his good name, before he has years to know the value of it. But I am not to be prejudiced against my nephew by such, I promise you. No, no; if Charles has done nothing false or mean, I shall compound for his extravagance.

Rowley. Then, my life on't, you will reclaim him. Ah, sir! it gives me new life to find that *your* heart is not turned against him; and that the son of my good old master has one friend, however, left.

Sir Oliver S. What, shall I forget, Master Rowley, when I was at his years myself? Egad, my brother and I were neither of us very prudent youths; and yet, I believe, you have not seen many better men than your old master was.

Rowley. Sir, 't is this reflection gives me assurance that Charles may yet be a credit to his family. But here comes Sir Peter.

Sir Oliver S. Egad, so he does. Mercy on me! he's greatly altered, and seems to have a settled married look! One may read *husband* in his face at this distance!

Enter Sir Peter Teazle.

Sir Peter T. Ha! Sir Oliver, my old friend! Welcome to England a thousand times!

Sir Oliver S. Thank you — thank you, Sir Peter! and i'faith I am glad to find you well, believe me.

Sir Peter T. Oh! 't is a long time since we met — fifteen years, I doubt, Sir Oliver, and many a cross accident in the time.

Sir Oliver S. Ay, I have had my share. But

what! I find you are married, hey? Well, well, it can't be helped; and so — I wish you joy with all my heart.

Sir Peter T. Thank you, thank you, Sir Oliver. Yes, I have entered into — the happy state; but [55 we'll not talk of that now.

Sir Oliver S. True, true, Sir Peter; old friends should not begin on grievances at first meeting; no, no, no.

Rowley. Take care, pray, sir. 60

Sir Oliver S. Well; so one of my nephews is a wild fellow, hey?

Sir Peter T. Wild! Ah! my old friend, I grieve for your disappointment there; he's a lost young man, indeed. However, his brother will make you [65 amends. Joseph is, indeed, what a youth should be. Everybody in the world speaks well of him.

Sir Oliver S. I am sorry to hear it; he has too good a character to be an honest fellow. Everybody speaks well of him! Pshaw! then he has bowed as [70 low to knaves and fools as to the honest dignity of genius and virtue.

Sir Peter T. What, Sir Oliver! do you blame him for not making enemies?

Sir Oliver S. Yes, if he has merit enough to de- [75 serve them.

Sir Peter T. Well, well; you'll be convinced when you know him. 'T is edification to hear him converse; he professes the noblest sentiments.

Sir Oliver S. Oh! plague of his sentiments! If he [80 salutes me with a scrap of morality in his mouth, I shall be sick directly. But, however, don't mistake me, Sir Peter; I don't mean to defend Charles's

errors; but before I form my judgment of either of them, I intend to make a trial of their hearts; and [85 my friend Rowley and I have planned something for the purpose.

Rowley. And Sir Peter shall own for once he has been mistaken.

Sir Peter T. Oh! my life on Joseph's honour. 90

Sir Oliver S. Well — come, give us a bottle of good wine, and we'll drink the lads' health, and tell you our scheme.

Sir Peter T. Allons, then!

Sir Oliver S. And don't, Sir Peter, be so severe [95 against your old friend's son. Odds my life! I am not sorry that he has run out of the course a little; for my part I hate to see prudence clinging to the green suckers of youth; 't is like ivy round a sapling, and spoils the growth of the tree. [*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

Scene I. Sir Peter Teazle's.

Enter Sir Peter Teazle, Sir Oliver Surface, *and* Rowley.

Sir Peter T. Well, then, we will see this fellow first, and have our wine afterwards; but how is this, Master Rowley? I don't see the jet of your scheme.

Rowley. Why, sir, this Mr. Stanley, who I was speaking of, is nearly related to them by their [5 mother. He was a merchant in Dublin, but has been ruined by a series of undeserved misfortunes. He has

99. suckers: shoots thrown out from the root or base of a tree. Figuratively, the natural instincts of youth.

3. jet: gist, point.

applied, by letter, to Mr. Surface and Charles; from the former he has received nothing but evasive promises of future service, while Charles has done all [10 that his extravagance has left him power to do, and he is, at this time, endeavouring to raise a sum of money, part of which, in the midst of his own distresses, I know he intends for the service of poor Stanley.

Sir Oliver S. Ah! he is my brother's son. 15

Sir Peter T. Well, but how is Sir Oliver personally to ——

Rowley. Why, sir, I will inform Charles and his brother that Stanley has obtained permission to apply personally to his friends, and as they have neither [20 of them ever seen him, let Sir Oliver assume his character, and he will have a fair opportunity of judging, at least, of the benevolence of their dispositions; and believe me, sir, you will find in the youngest brother one who, in the midst of folly and dissipation, has still, [25 as our immortal bard expresses it, "a heart to pity, and a hand, open as day, for melting charity."

Sir Peter T. Pshaw! What signifies his having an open hand or purse either, when he has nothing left to give? Well, well, make the trial, if you please. But [30 where is the fellow whom you brought for Sir Oliver to examine, relative to Charles's affairs?

Rowley. Below, waiting his commands, and no one can give him better intelligence. This, Sir Oliver, is a friendly Jew, who, to do him justice, has done [35 everything in his power to bring your nephew to a proper sense of his extravagance.

Sir Peter T. Pray let us have him in.

26. **a heart to pity.** Quoted from Shakespeare's *II Henry IV*, IV, iv, 31–32.

Rowley. Desire Mr. Moses to walk upstairs.

[*Apart to* Servant.

Sir Peter T. But, pray, why should you sup- [40
pose he will speak the truth?

Rowley. Oh! I have convinced him that he has no chance of recovering certain sums advanced to Charles, but through the bounty of Sir Oliver, who he knows is arrived, so that you may depend on his fidelity to [45 his own interests. I have also another evidence in my power — one Snake, whom I have detected in a matter little short of forgery, and shall speedily produce him to remove some of your prejudices.

Sir Peter T. I have heard too much on that [50 subject.

Rowley. Here comes the honest Israelite.

Enter Moses.

This is Sir Oliver.

Sir Oliver S. Sir, I understand you have lately had great dealings with my nephew, Charles.

Moses. Yes, Sir Oliver, I have done all I could [55 for him; but he was ruined before he came to me for assistance.

Sir Oliver S. That was unlucky, truly; for you have had no opportunity of showing your talents.

Moses. None at all; I had n't the pleasure of [60 knowing his distresses till he was some thousands worse than nothing.

Sir Oliver S. Unfortunate, indeed! But I suppose you have done all in your power for him, honest Moses? 65

Moses. Yes, he knows that. This very evening I was to have brought him a gentleman from the city, who does not know him, and will, I believe, advance him some money.

Sir Peter T. What! one Charles has never had money from before?

Moses. Yes; Mr. Premium, of Crutched Friars, formerly a broker.

Sir Peter T. Egad, Sir Oliver, a thought strikes me! Charles, you say, does not know Mr. Premium?

Moses. Not at all.

Sir Peter T. Now then, Sir Oliver, you may have a better opportunity of satisfying yourself than by an old romancing tale of a poor relation. Go with my friend Moses, and represent Premium, and then, I'll answer for it, you'll see your nephew in all his glory.

Sir Oliver S. Egad, I like this idea better than the other, and I may visit Joseph afterwards as Old Stanley.

Sir Peter T. True, so you may.

Rowley. Well, this is taking Charles rather at a disadvantage, to be sure. However, Moses, you understand Sir Peter, and will be faithful?

Moses. You may depend upon me. This is near the time I was to have gone.

Sir Oliver S. I'll accompany you as soon as you please, Moses. But hold! I have forgot one thing — how the plague shall I be able to pass for a Jew?

Moses. There's no need — the principal is Christian.

Sir Oliver S. Is he? I'm very sorry to hear it. But then, again, a'n't I rather too smartly dressed to look like a money lender?

Sir Peter T. Not at all; 't would not be out of character if you went in your own carriage — would it, Moses?

72. **Crutched Friars:** a street in London, near the Tower. The name comes from the religious order, Crossed, or Crouched, Friars (1244–1656) who had a convent in this neighborhood.

Moses. Not in the least.

Sir Oliver S. Well, but how must I talk? There's certainly some cant of usury and mode of treating that I ought to know.

Sir Peter T. O! there's not much to learn. The great point, as I take it, is to be exorbitant enough in your demands — hey, Moses?

Moses. Yes, that's a very great point.

Sir Oliver S. I'll answer for't I'll not be wanting in that. I'll ask him eight or ten per cent. on the loan, at least.

Moses. If you ask him no more than that, you'll be discovered immediately.

Sir Oliver S. Hey! what the plague! How much, then?

Moses. That depends upon the circumstances. If he appears not very anxious for the supply, you should require only forty or fifty per cent.; but if you find him in great distress, and want the moneys very bad, you may ask double.

Sir Peter T. A good honest trade you're learning, Sir Oliver!

Sir Oliver S. Truly, I think so; and not unprofitable.

Moses. Then, you know, you hav' n't the moneys yourself, but are forced to borrow them for him of an old friend.

Sir Oliver S. Oh! I borrow it of a friend, do I?

Moses. And your friend is an unconscionable dog; but you can't help that.

Sir Oliver S. My friend an unconscionable dog?

126. **forced to borrow them for him.** Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* (I, iii) says that he has to borrow of Tubal. (Brown.)

Moses. Yes, and he himself has not the moneys by him, but is forced to sell stock at a great loss.

Sir Oliver S. He is forced to sell stock at a great loss, is he? Well, that's very kind of him.

Sir Peter T. I' faith, Sir Oliver — Mr. Premium, I mean — you'll soon be master of the trade. But, Moses! would not you have him run out a little against the Annuity Bill? That would be in character, I should think.

Moses. Very much.

Rowley. And lament that a young man now must be at years of discretion before he is suffered to ruin himself?

Moses. Ay, great pity!

Sir Peter T. And abuse the public for allowing merit to an Act, whose only object is to snatch misfortune and imprudence from the rapacious gripe of usury, and give the minor a chance of inheriting his estate without being undone by coming into possession.

Sir Oliver S. So, so; Moses shall give me further instructions as we go together.

Sir Peter T. You will not have much time, for your nephew lives hard by.

Sir Oliver S. O! never fear; my tutor appears so able, that though Charles lived in the next street, it

139. **Annuity Bill.** "In 1777 a committee of the House of Commons was appointed to inquire into the laws concerning usury and annuities; and on its report in May, the month in which this play was first acted, a bill was brought in and passed, providing that all contracts with minors for annuities shall be void, and that those procuring them and solicitors charging more than ten shillings *per cent* shall be subject to fine or imprisonment." (Matthews.)

must be my own fault if I am not a complete rogue before I turn the corner.

[*Exeunt* Sir Oliver Surface *and* Moses.

Sir Peter T. So, now, I think Sir Oliver will be [160 convinced. You are partial, Rowley, and would have prepared Charles for the other plot.

Rowley. No, upon my word, Sir Peter.

Sir Peter T. Well, go bring me this Snake, and I'll hear what he has to say presently. I see Maria, [165 and want to speak with her. [*Exit* Rowley.] I should be glad to be convinced my suspicions of Lady Teazle and Charles were unjust. I have never yet opened my mind on this subject to my friend Joseph. I am determined I will do it; he will give me his opinion [170 sincerely.

Enter Maria.

So, child, has Mr. Surface returned with you?

Maria. No, sir; he was engaged.

Sir Peter T. Well, Maria, do you not reflect, the more you converse with that amiable young man, [175 what return his partiality for you deserves?

Maria. Indeed, Sir Peter, your frequent importunity on this subject distresses me extremely; you compel me to declare, that I know no man who has ever paid me a particular attention, whom I would not [180 prefer to Mr. Surface.

Sir Peter T. So, here's perverseness! No, no, Maria, 't is Charles only whom you would prefer. 'T is evident his vices and follies have won your heart.

Maria. This is unkind, sir. You know I have [185 obeyed you in neither seeing nor corresponding with him. I have heard enough to convince me that he is unworthy my regard. Yet I cannot think it cul-

pable, if, while my understanding severely condemns his vices, my heart suggests some pity for his dis- [190 tresses.

Sir Peter T. Well, well, pity him as much as you please; but give your heart and hand to a worthier object.

Maria. Never to his brother! 195

Sir Peter T. Go, perverse and obstinate! But take care, madam; you have never yet known what the authority of a guardian is. Don't compel me to inform you of it.

Maria. I can only say, you shall not have just [200 reason. 'T is true, by my father's will, I am for a short period bound to regard you as his substitute; but must cease to think you so, when you would compel me to be miserable. [*Exit* MARIA.

Sir Peter T. Was ever man so crossed as I am? [205 everything conspiring to fret me! I had not been involved in matrimony a fortnight, before her father, a hale and hearty man, died, on purpose, I believe, for the pleasure of plaguing me with the care of his daughter. But here comes my helpmate! She [210 appears in great good humour. How happy I should be if I could tease her into loving me, though but a little!

Enter Lady TEAZLE.

Lady T. Lud! Sir Peter, I hope you hav' n't been quarrelling with Maria? It is not using me well [215 to be ill humoured when I am not by.

Sir Peter T. Ah! Lady Teazle, you might have the power to make me good humoured at all times.

Lady T. I am sure I wish I had; for I want you to be in a charming sweet temper at this moment. [220

Do be good humoured now, and let me have two hundred pounds, will you?

Sir Peter T. Two hundred pounds! What, a'n't I to be in a good humour without paying for it? But speak to me thus, and i' faith there's nothing I could refuse you. You shall have it; but seal me a bond for the repayment.

Lady T. O no — there. My note of hand will do as well. [*Offering her hand.*

Sir Peter T. And you shall no longer reproach me with not giving you an independent settlement. I mean shortly to surprise you. But shall we always live thus, hey?

Lady T. If you please. I'm sure I don't care how soon we leave off quarrelling, provided you'll own you were tired first.

Sir Peter T. Well, then let our future contest be, who shall be most obliging.

Lady T. I assure you, Sir Peter, good nature becomes you. You look now as you did before we were married, when you used to walk with me under the elms, and tell me stories of what a gallant you were in your youth, and chuck me under the chin, you would; and ask me if I thought I could love an old fellow, who would deny me nothing — did n't you?

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes; and you were as kind and attentive ——

Lady T. Ay, so I was, and would always take your part, when my acquaintance used to abuse you, and turn you into ridicule.

Sir Peter T. Indeed!

Lady T. Ay, and when my cousin Sophy has called

you a stiff, peevish old bachelor, and laughed at me for thinking of marrying one who might be my [255 father, I have always defended you, and said, I did n't think you so ugly by any means, and I dared say you'd make a very good sort of a husband.

Sir Peter T. And you prophesied right; and we shall now be the happiest couple —— 260

Lady T. And never differ again?

Sir Peter T. No, never! Though at the same time, indeed, my dear Lady Teazle, you must watch your temper very seriously; for in all our little quarrels, my dear, if you recollect, my love, you always [265 began first.

Lady T. I beg your pardon, my dear Sir Peter: indeed, you always gave the provocation.

Sir Peter T. Now see, my angel! take care; contradicting is n't the way to keep friends. 270

Lady T. Then don't you begin it, my love!

Sir Peter T. There, now! you — you are going on. You don't perceive, my life, that you are just doing the very thing which you know always makes me angry. 275

Lady T. Nay, you know if you will be angry without any reason, my dear ——

Sir Peter T. There! now you want to quarrel again.

Lady T. No, I am sure I don't; but if you will be so peevish —— 280

Sir Peter T. There now! who begins first?

Lady T. Why you, to be sure. I said nothing; but there's no bearing your temper.

Sir Peter T. No, no, madam; the fault's in your own temper. 285

Lady T. Ay, you are just what my cousin Sophy said you would be.

Sir Peter T. Your cousin Sophy is a forward, impertinent gipsy.

Lady T. You are a great bear, I'm sure, to abuse my relations.

Sir Peter T. Now may all the plagues of marriage be doubled on me, if ever I try to be friends with you any more!

Lady T. So much the better.

Sir Peter T. No, no, madam; 't is evident you never cared a pin for me, and I was a madman to marry you — a pert, rural coquette, that had refused half the honest squires in the neighbourhood.

Lady T. And I am sure I was a fool to marry you; an old dangling bachelor, who was single at fifty, only because he never could meet with any one who would have him.

Sir Peter T. Ay, ay, madam; but you were pleased enough to listen to me; you never had such an offer before.

Lady T. No! did n't I refuse Sir Tivy Terrier, who everybody said would have been a better match? for his estate is just as good as yours, and he has broke his neck since we have been married.

Sir Peter T. I have done with you, madam! You are an unfeeling, ungrateful — but there's an end of everything. I believe you capable of everything that is bad. Yes, madam, I now believe the reports relative to you and Charles, madam. Yes, madam, *you* and Charles are — not without grounds ——

Lady T. Take care, Sir Peter; you had better not insinuate any such thing! I'll not be suspected without cause, I promise you.

Sir Peter T. Very well, madam! very well! A

separate maintenance as soon as you please. Yes, madam, or a divorce! I'll make an example of myself for the benefit of all old bachelors. Let us separate, madam.

Lady T. Agreed, agreed! And now, my dear Sir [325 Peter, we are of a mind once more, we may be the happiest couple, and never differ again, you know — ha! ha! ha! Well, you are going to be in a passion, I see, and shall only interrupt you; so, bye — bye. [*Exit.*

Sir Peter T. Plagues and tortures! Can't I [330 make her angry either! Oh, I am the most miserable fellow! but I'll not bear her presuming to keep her temper; no! she may break my heart, but she sha'n't keep her temper. [*Exit.*

SCENE II. CHARLES SURFACE'S *House.*

Enter TRIP, MOSES, *and* SIR OLIVER SURFACE.

Trip. Here, Master Moses! if you'll stay a moment, I'll try whether — what's the gentleman's name?

Sir Oliver S. Mr. Moses, what is my name?

Moses. Mr. Premium.

Trip. Premium — very well. 5

[*Exit* TRIP, *taking snuff.*

Sir Oliver S. To judge by the servants, one would n't believe the master was ruined. But what! — sure, this was my brother's house?

Moses. Yes, sir; Mr. Charles bought it of Mr. Joseph, with the furniture, pictures, &c., just as the [10 old gentleman left it. Sir Peter thought it a piece of extravagance in him.

Sir Oliver S. In my mind, the other's economy in selling it to him was more reprehensible by half.

Enter Trip.

Trip. My master says you must wait gentlemen; he has company, and can't speak with you yet.

Sir Oliver S. If he knew who it was wanted to see him, perhaps he would not send such a message?

Trip. Yes, yes, sir; he knows you are here. I did not forget little Premium; no, no, no.

Sir Oliver S. Very well; and I pray, sir, what may be your name?

Trip. Trip, sir; my name is Trip, at your service.

Sir Oliver S. Well then, Mr. Trip, you have a pleasant sort of place here, I guess?

Trip. Why, yes; here are three or four of us pass our time agreeably enough; but then our wages are sometimes a little in arrear — and not very great either — but fifty pounds a year, and find our own bags and bouquets.

Sir Oliver S. Bags and bouquets! halters and bastinadoes! [*Aside.*

Trip. And, *à propos*, Moses; have you been able to get me that little bill discounted?

Sir Oliver S. Wants to raise money too! mercy on me! Has his distresses too, I warrant, like a lord, and affects creditors and duns. [*Aside.*

Moses. 'T was not to be done, indeed, Mr. Trip.

Trip. Good lack, you surprise me! My friend Brush has indorsed it, and I thought when he put his name on the back of a bill 't was the same as cash.

Moses. No! 't would n't do.

Trip. A small sum; but twenty pounds. Hark'ee

30. **bags and bouquets.** Bag-wigs were fashionable in the eighteenth century. In these the back-hair was enclosed in a small ornamental bag, or pouch, of silk.

Moses, do you think you could n't get it me by way of annuity?

Sir Oliver S. An annuity! ha! ha! a footman raise money by way of annuity! Well done, luxury, egad! [*Aside.*

Moses. Well, but you must insure your place.

Trip. O with all my heart! I'll insure my place, and my life, too, if you please.

Sir Oliver S. It is more than I would your neck. [*Aside.*

Moses. But is there nothing you could deposit?

Trip. Why, nothing capital of my master's wardrobe has dropped lately; but I could give you a mortgage on some of his winter clothes, with equity of [55 redemption before November; or you shall have the reversion of the French velvet, or a post-obit on the blue and silver: these, I should think, Moses, with a few pair of point ruffles, as a collateral security; hey, my little fellow?

Moses. Well, well. [*Bell rings.*

Trip. Egad, I heard the bell! I believe, gentlemen,

55–56. **equity of redemption:** the right of a mortgagor to redeem the property mortgaged by payment of the principal and interest.

57. **reversion — post-obit:** legal terms, used in the sense of "the right of succeeding to."

"Sheridan has been accused, justly enough, of making his servants talk as their masters; but this is an old failing of writers of comedy, although few of them would have risked this accurate use of the legal phraseology which Sheridan at all times affected. Sheridan's Trip and Fag recall the amusing personages of *High Life Below Stairs*, generally attributed to a certain Reverend James Townley, but more probably the work of David Garrick; it was suggested by a paper of Steele's 'On Servants,' in *The Spectator*, No. 88." (Matthews.)

59. **point ruffles:** ruffles made of point-lace.

I can now introduce you. Don't forget the annuity, little Moses! This way, gentlemen. I'll insure my place, you know.

Sir Oliver S. If the man be a shadow of the master, this is the temple of dissipation indeed. [*Exeunt.*

Scene III. Charles Surface, Sir Harry Bumper, Careless, *&c. &c. discovered at a table with wine, &c.*

Charles S. 'Fore heaven, 't is true! there's the great degeneracy of the age. Many of our acquaintance have taste, spirit, and politeness; but, plague on't, they won't drink.

Careless. It is so indeed, Charles! they give in to all the substantial luxuries of the table, and abstain from nothing but wine and wit. O certainly society suffers by it intolerably; for now, instead of the social spirit of raillery that used to mantle over a glass of bright Burgundy, their conversation is become just like the Spa water they drink, which has all the pertness and flatulence of Champagne, without the spirit or flavour.

1st Gent. But what are they to do who love play better than wine?

Careless. True; there's Sir Harry diets himself for gaming, and is now under a hazard regimen.

Charles S. Then he'll have the worst of it. What! you would n't train a horse for the course by keeping him from corn? For my part, egad, I am never so successful as when I am a little merry; let me throw on a bottle of Champagne, and I never lose; at least,

17. **hazard**: a game of chance, played with dice, very popular in the eighteenth century. Craps of the present day is somewhat similar.

I never feel my losses, which is exactly the same thing.

2nd Gent. Ay, that I believe.

Charles S. And then, what man can pretend to be a believer in love, who is an abjurer of wine? 'T is the test by which the lover knows his own heart. Fill a dozen bumpers to a dozen beauties, and she that floats atop is the maid that has bewitched you.

Careless. Now then, Charles, be honest, and give us your real favourite.

Charles S. Why, I have withheld her only in compassion to you. If I toast her, you must give a round of her peers, which is impossible — on earth.

Careless. Oh! then we'll find some canonized vestals or heathen goddesses that will do, I warrant!

Charles S. Here then, bumpers, you rogues! bumpers! Maria! Maria!

Sir Harry B. Maria who?

Charles S. O damn the surname; 't is too formal to be registered in Love's calendar; but now, Sir Harry, beware, we must have beauty superlative.

Careless. Nay, never study, Sir Harry; we'll stand to the toast, though your mistress should want an [45 eye, and you know you have a song will excuse you.

Sir Harry B. Egad, so I have! and I'll give him the song instead of the lady.

SONG

Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen;
Here's to the widow of fifty;
Here's to the flaunting extravagant quean,
And here's to the housewife that's thrifty.

34–35. **a round of her peers.** Toasts to her equals.

49. **Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen.** "It has been

Chorus. Let the toast pass,
Drink to the lass,
I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for the glass.

Here's to the charmer whose dimples we prize;
Now to the maid who has none, sir;
Here's to the girl with a pair of blue eyes,
And here's to the nymph with but *one*, sir.
Chorus. Let the toast pass, &c.

Here's to the maid with a bosom of snow;
Now to her that's as brown as a berry;
Here's to the wife with a face full of woe,
And now to the girl that is merry.
Chorus. Let the toast pass, &c.

For let 'em be clumsy, or let 'em be slim,
Young or ancient, I care not a feather;
So fill a pint bumper quite up to the brim,
And let us e'en toast them together.
Chorus. Let the toast pass, &c.

All. Bravo! bravo!

Enter Trip, *and whispers* Charles Surface.

Charles S. Gentlemen, you must excuse me a little. Careless, take the chair, will you?

Careless. Nay, pr'ythee, Charles, what now? This is one of your peerless beauties, I suppose, has dropt in by chance?

asserted (in *Notes and Queries*, 5th S., II, 245, and elsewhere) that Sheridan derived this song from a ballad in Suckling's play, *The Goblins;* but a careful comparison of the two songs shows that there is really no foundation for the charge. The music to Sheridan's song was composed by his father-in-law, Thomas Linley, who had been his partner in *The Duenna*." (Matthews.)

Charles S. No, faith! To tell you the truth, 't is a Jew and a broker, who are come by appointment.

Careless. O damn it! let's have the Jew in.

1*st Gent.* Ay, and the broker too, by all means.

2*nd Gent.* Yes, yes, the Jew and the broker.

Charles S. Egad, with all my heart! Trip, bid the gentlemen walk in; though there's one of them a stranger, I can tell you.

Careless. Charles, let us give them some gener- ous Burgundy, and perhaps they 'll grow conscientious.

Charles S. O hang 'em, no! wine does but draw forth a man's natural qualities, and to make them drink would only be to whet their knavery.

Enter TRIP, Sir OLIVER SURFACE, *and* MOSES.

Charles S. So, honest Moses, walk in; walk in, pray, Mr. Premium — that's the gentleman's name, is n't it, Moses?

Moses. Yes, sir.

Charles S. Set chairs, Trip— sit down, Mr. Premium — glasses, Trip — sit down, Moses. Come, Mr. Premium, I'll give you a sentiment; here's *Success to usury!* Moses, fill the gentleman a bumper.

Moses. Success to usury!

Careless. Right, Moses; usury is prudence and industry, and deserves to succeed.

Sir Oliver S. Then, *here's all the success it deserves!*

Careless. No, no, that won't do! Mr. Premium, you have demurred at the toast, and must drink it in a pint bumper.

1*st Gent.* A pint bumper, at least.

87–88. **wine does but draw forth a man's natural qualities.** Cf. the Latin proverb " *In vino veritas.*"

Moses. O pray, sir, consider; Mr. Premium's a gentleman.

Careless. And therefore loves good wine.

2nd Gent. Give Moses a quart glass; this is mutiny, and a high contempt for the chair.

Careless. Here, now for't! I'll see justice done, to the last drop of my bottle.

Sir Oliver S. Nay, pray, gentlemen; I did not expect this usage.

Charles S. No, hang it, you sha'n't! Mr. Premium's a stranger.

Sir Oliver S. Odd! I wish I was well out of their company. [*Aside.*

Careless. Plague on 'em, then! if they don't drink, we'll not sit down with them. Come, Harry, the dice are in the next room. Charles, you'll join us when you have finished your business with the gentlemen!

Charles S. I will! I will! [*Exeunt.*] Careless!

Careless. [*Returning.*] Well!

Charles S. Perhaps I may want you.

Careless. O, you know I am always ready: word, note, or bond, 't is all the same to me. [*Exit.*

Moses. Sir, this is Mr. Premium, a gentleman of the strictest honour and secresy; and always performs what he undertakes. Mr. Premium, this is ——

Charles S. Pshaw! have done. Sir, my friend Moses is a very honest fellow, but a little slow at expression: he'll be an hour giving us our titles. Mr. Premium, the plain state of the matter is this: I am an extravagant young fellow who wants to borrow money; you I take to be a prudent old fellow, who have got money to lend. I am blockhead enough to give fifty per cent. sooner than not have it; and you, I

presume, are rogue enough to take a hundred if you can get it. Now, sir, you see we are acquainted at once, and may proceed to business without further ceremony.

Sir Oliver S. Exceeding frank, upon my word. I see, sir, you are not a man of many compliments.

Charles S. Oh no, sir! plain dealing in business I always think best.

Sir Oliver S. Sir, I like you the better for it; however, you are mistaken in one thing; I have no money to lend, but I believe I could procure some of a friend; but then he's an unconscionable dog, is n't he, Moses?

Moses. But you can't help that.

Sir Oliver S. And must sell stock to accommodate you — must n't he, Moses?

Moses. Yes, indeed! You know I always speak the truth, and scorn to tell a lie!

Charles S. Right. People that speak truth generally do: but these are trifles, Mr. Premium. What! I know money is n't to be bought without paying for't!

Sir Oliver S. Well; but what security could you give? You have no land, I suppose?

Charles S. Not a molehill, nor a twig, but what's in the bough-pots out of the window!

Sir Oliver S. Nor any stock, I presume?

Charles S. Nothing but live stock, and that's only a few pointers and ponies. But pray, Mr. Premium, are you acquainted at all with any of my connections?

Sir Oliver S. Why, to say truth, I am.

164. **bough-pots:** window boxes for growing plants. Sometimes, vases for cut flowers or boughs.

Charles S. Then you must know that I have a [170 dev'lish rich uncle in the East Indies, Sir Oliver Surface, from whom I have the greatest expectations?

Sir Oliver S. That you have a wealthy uncle I have heard; but how your expectations will turn out is more, I believe, than you can tell. 175

Charles S. O no! there can be no doubt. They tell me I'm a prodigious favourite, and that he talks of leaving me everything.

Sir Oliver S. Indeed! this is the first I've heard of it. 180

Charles S. Yes, yes, 't is just so. Moses knows 't is true; don't you, Moses?

Moses. O yes! I'll swear to't.

Sir Oliver S. Egad, they'll persuade me presently I'm at Bengal. [*Aside.* 185

Charles S. Now, I propose, Mr. Premium, if it's agreeable to you, a post-obit on Sir Oliver's life; though at the same time the old fellow has been so liberal to me, that I give you my word, I should be very sorry to hear that anything had happened to [190 him.

Sir Oliver S. Not more than I should, I assure you. But the bond you mention happens to be just the worst security you could offer me, for I might live to a hundred, and never see the principal. 195

Charles S. Oh yes, you would; the moment Sir Oliver dies, you know, you would come on me for the money.

187. **post-obit.** The *Century Dictionary* (Q.V.) quotes these lines of the play in an illustration of its definition: "A bond given for the purpose of securing to a lender a sum of money on the death of some specified individual, from whom the borrower has expectations." Cf. a looser use of the word by Trip on page 65.

Sir Oliver S. Then I believe I should be the most unwelcome dun you ever had in your life.

Charles S. What! I suppose you're afraid that Sir Oliver is too good a life?

Sir Oliver S. No, indeed, I am not; though I have heard he is as hale and healthy as any man of his years in Christendom.

Charles S. There again now you are misinformed. No, no, the climate has hurt him considerably, poor uncle Oliver! Yes, yes, he breaks apace, I'm told, and is so much altered lately, that his nearest relations don't know him.

Sir Oliver S. No! ha! ha! ha! so much altered lately, that his nearest relations don't know him! ha! ha! ha! egad — ha! ha! ha!

Charles S. Ha! ha! you're glad to hear that, little Premium?

Sir Oliver S. No, no, I'm not.

Charles S. Yes, yes, you are — ha! ha! ha! You know that mends your chance.

Sir Oliver S. But I'm told Sir Oliver is coming over? Nay, some say he is actually arrived?

Charles S. Pshaw! Sure I must know better than you whether he's come or not. No, no; rely on't, he's at this moment at Calcutta. Is n't he, Moses?

Moses. O yes, certainly.

Sir Oliver S. Very true, as you say, you must [225 know better than I, though I have it from pretty good authority. Have n't I, Moses?

Moses. Yes, most undoubted!

Sir Oliver S. But, sir, as I understand you want a few hundreds immediately, is there nothing you [230 could dispose of?

Charles S. How do you mean?

Sir Oliver S. For instance, now, I have heard that your father left behind him a great quantity of massive old plate?

Charles S. O Lud! that's gone long ago. Moses can tell you how better than I can.

Sir Oliver S. Good lack! all the family race-cups and corporation-bowls! [*Aside.*] — Then it was also supposed that his library was one of the most valuable and compact ——

Charles S. Yes, yes, so it was — vastly too much so for a private gentleman. For my part, I was always of a communicative disposition, so I thought it a shame to keep so much knowledge to myself.

Sir Oliver S. Mercy upon me! Learning that had run in the family like an heirloom! [*Aside.*] — Pray, what are become of the books?

Charles S. You must enquire of the auctioneer, Master Premium, for I don't believe even Moses can direct you.

Moses. I know nothing of books.

Sir Oliver S. So, so, nothing of the family property left, I suppose?

Charles S. Not much, indeed; unless you have a mind to the family pictures. I have got a room full of ancestors above, and if you have a taste for paintings, egad, you shall have 'em a bargain.

Sir Oliver S. Hey! what the devil! sure, you would n't sell your forefathers, would you?

Charles S. Every man of them to the best bidder.

238–39. **race-cups and corporation-bowls.** "Gold — or silver — cups won at races; bowls received as presents from the city." (*British Theatre*, 1828.)

Sir Oliver S. What! your great uncles and aunts?

Charles S. Ay, and my great grandfathers and grandmothers too.

Sir Oliver S. Now I give him up. [*Aside.*] — What the plague, have you no bowels for your own kindred? Odd's life, do you take me for Shylock in the play, that you would raise money of me on your own flesh and blood?

Charles S. Nay, my little broker, don't be angry: what need you care if you have your money's worth?

Sir Oliver S. Well, I'll be the purchaser: I think I can dispose of the family canvas. Oh, I'll never forgive him this! never! [*Aside.*

Enter CARELESS.

Careless. Come, Charles, what keeps you?

Charles S. I can't come yet: i' faith we are going to have a sale above stairs; here's little Premium will buy all my ancestors.

Careless. O, burn your ancestors!

Charles S. No, he may do that afterwards, if he pleases. Stay, Careless, we want you; egad, you shall be auctioneer; so come along with us.

Careless. Oh, have with you, if that's the case. I can handle a hammer as well as a dice-box!

Sir Oliver S. Oh, the profligates! [*Aside.*

Charles S. Come, Moses, you shall be appraiser, if we want one. Gad's life, little Premium, you don't seem to like the business?

Sir Oliver S. O yes, I do, vastly. Ha! ha! ha! yes, yes, I think it a rare joke to sell one's family by auction — ha! ha! — O the prodigal! [*Aside.*

291–92. **to sell one's family by auction.** A contemporary

Charles S. To be sure! when a man wants money, where the plague should he get assistance if he can't make free with his own relations? [*Exeunt.* 295

ACT IV

Scene I. *Picture Room at* Charles's.

Enter Charles Surface, Sir Oliver Surface, Moses, *and* Careless.

Charles S. Walk in, gentlemen; pray walk in. Here they are, the family of the Surfaces, up to the Conquest.

Sir Oliver S. And, in my opinion, a goodly collection.

Charles S. Ay, ay; these are done in the true spirit [5 of portrait painting; no *volontiere grace* and expression. Not like the works of your modern Raphaels, who give you the strongest resemblance, yet contrive to make your portrait independent of you; so that you may sink the original and not hurt the picture. No, no; [10 the merit of these is the inveterate likeness — all stiff and awkward as the originals, and like nothing in human nature besides.

Sir Oliver S. Ah! we shall never see such figures of men again. 15

review (see page xxxiii) commented upon this auction with but a single bidder. Unquestionably Sheridan uses the word playfully. Dr. Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755 edition) defines "auction" as "a manner of sale in which one person bids after another, till so much is bid as the seller is content to take." Auction rooms, it may be mentioned in passing, were a favorite resort of amusement-seekers of the day. *Cf.* Tony Lumpkin's appearance, with an auctioneer's mallet in his hand, in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, I, ii. Samuel Foote has a play entitled *An Auction of Pictures*.

6. volontiere grace: ease of attitude.

Charles S. I hope not. Well, you see, Master Premium, what a domestic character I am. Here I sit of an evening surrounded by my family. But come, get to your pulpit, Mr. Auctioneer; here's an old gouty chair of my father's will answer the purpose.

Careless. Ay, ay, this will do. But, Charles, I hav'n't a hammer; and what's an auctioneer without his hammer?

Charles S. Egad, that's true. What parchment have we here? O, our genealogy in full. Here, Care- less, you shall have no common bit of mahogany; here's the family tree, for you, you rogue; this shall be your hammer, and now you may knock down my ancestors with their own pedigree.

Sir Oliver S. What an unnatural rogue! an *ex post facto* parricide! [*Aside.*

Careless. Yes, yes, here's a bit of your generation indeed; faith, Charles, this is the most convenient thing you could have found for the business, for 't will serve not only as a hammer, but a cat- alogue into the bargain. Come, begin, — A-going, a-going, a-going!

Charles S. Bravo, Careless! Well, here's my great uncle, Sir Richard Raveline, a marvellous good general in his day, I assure you. He served in all the Duke of Marlborough's wars, and got that cut over his eye

38–39. **Well, here 's my great uncle.** "*The School for Scandal* was one of the plays performed by the English actors on their famous visit to Paris in 1827, — a visit which revealed the might and range of the English drama to the French, and thereby served to make possible the Romanticist revolt of 1830. Victor Hugo was an assiduous follower of the English performances; and it may be that this scene of *The School for Scandal* suggested to him the scene with the portraits in *Hernani*." (Matthews.)

40–41. **Duke of Marlborough.** John Churchill (1650–1722),

at the battle of Malplaquet. What say you, Mr. Premium? look at him; there's a hero, not cut out of his feathers, as your modern clipp'd captains are, but enveloped in wig and regimentals, as a general should be. What do you bid?

Moses. Mr. Premium would have *you* speak.

Charles S. Why, then, he shall have him for ten pounds, and I'm sure that's not dear for a staff-officer.

Sir Oliver S. Heaven deliver me! his famous uncle Richard for ten pounds! [*Aside.*] — Well, sir, I take him at that.

Charles S. Careless, knock down my uncle Richard. Here, now, is a maiden sister of his, my great aunt Deborah, done by Kneller, thought to be in his best manner, and a very formidable likeness. There she is, you see, a shepherdess feeding her flock. You shall have her for five pounds ten; the sheep are worth the money.

Sir Oliver S. Ah! poor Deborah; a woman who set such a value on herself! [*Aside.*] — Five pounds ten; she's mine.

Charles S. Knock down my aunt Deborah! Here, now, are two that were a sort of cousins of theirs.

the celebrated British general in the War of the Spanish Succession. His victories include Blenheim, 1704, Ramillies, 1706, Oudenarde, 1708, and Malplaquet, 1709.

56. **Kneller.** Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723), a German portrait painter to whom sat many of the English royalty and nobility.

58. **a shepherdess feeding her flock.** In Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) Dr. Primrose's historical family group was to be painted with "Sophia . . . a shepherdess, with as many sheep as the painter could put in for nothing." (Brown.)

You see, Moses, these pictures were done sometime ago, when beaux wore wigs, and the ladies their own hair.

Sir Oliver S. Yes, truly, headdresses appear to have been a little lower in those days. 70

Charles S. Well, take that couple for the same.

Moses. 'T is good bargain.

69. **headdresses.** A communication to the *Town and Country Magazine* for July, 1777, comments upon the enormous headdresses of the period: "I am sorry to say that the imitation of French fashions is carried to such an extravagant height, that we scarce know whether we are in Paris or London. Our modern macaronies will resemble the French *petits maîtres*, who make no ceremony of using *fard*, as well as the ladies; have their toilets, and their complexion improvers, in as many boxes as a first-rate coquette twenty years past. Indeed our females now use *rouge* and blanc with so little care, that it may easily be discerned from one side-box to another across the pit; and I shall not wonder soon to see the ladies in public places, imitate the French females so far, as to pull out their paint boxes and rectify their faces of any temporary decay. Could the dames in the time of good queen Bess rise and see them so deform their natural beauty, they would certainly pull the caps of the modern belles, and frighten them, as ghosts ought to do, into a belief of their folly and extravagance; as the most severe, though just satires, have been thrown away upon them; and indeed they seem to rise superior to sarcasms, and to rear their heads the higher, the oftener they are pulled down. It is certain that if they continue the increase of their top-sails much longer, the coaches and sedans must literally be considerably heightened, as their heads cannot be held up now in the modern ones. It is doubtless for the interest of coach and chair-makers that these fashions should be increased to the utmost pitch of preposterousness, as they will thereby increase their trade as well as their bills. A certain milliner at the west end of the town, has already raised her chariot upwards of six inches; and there is reason to believe that the carriage was a compliment to her from a coach-maker in Long-Acre, who was desirous, as she gives the *ton* in dress, she should also do it in *voitures*."

Charles S. Careless! This, now, is a grandfather of my mother, a learned judge, well known on the Western Circuit. What do you rate him at, Moses?

Moses. Four guineas.

Charles S. Four guineas! Gad's life, you don't bid me the price of his wig. Mr. Premium, you have more respect for the woolsack; do let us knock his lordship down at fifteen.

Sir Oliver S. By all means.

Careless. Gone!

Charles S. And there are two brothers of his, William and Walter Blunt, Esquires, both members of parliament, and noted speakers, and what's very [85 extraordinary, I believe, this is the first time they were ever bought or sold.

Sir Oliver S. That is very extraordinary, indeed! I'll take them at your own price, for the honour of Parliament.

Careless. Well said, little Premium! I'll knock them down at forty.

Charles S. Here's a jolly fellow; I don't know what relation, but he was mayor of Manchester. Take him at eight pounds.

Sir Oliver S. No, no; six will do for the mayor.

Charles S. Come, make it guineas, and I'll throw you the two aldermen there into the bargain.

Sir Oliver S. They're mine.

79. **woolsack.** In the House of Lords, the seat of the presiding officer — the Lord High Chancellor — is a sack of wool shaped into a divan. Lecky remarks: "It is said to have been originally intended to typify the supreme importance which, in the earlier phases of English history, the woolen manufacture occupied in English policy." By metonymy, "woolsack" signifies all that pertains to the law; the Lord Chancellor being the head of the English judiciary system.

Charles S. Careless, knock down the mayor [100 and aldermen. But, plague on 't, we shall be all day retailing in this manner. Do let us deal wholesale; what say you, little Premium? Give us three hundred pounds for the rest of the family in the lump.

Careless. Ay, ay, that will be the best way. 105

Sir Oliver S. Well, well, anything to accommodate you — they are mine. But there is one portrait which you have always passed over.

Careless. What, that ill-looking little fellow over the settee? 110

Sir Oliver S. Yes, sir, I mean that; though I don't think him so ill-looking a little fellow, by any means.

Charles S. What, that? Oh! that's my uncle Oliver; 't was done before he went to India. 115

Careless. Your uncle Oliver! Gad, then, you'll never be friends, Charles. That, now, to me, is as stern a looking rogue as ever I saw — an unforgiving eye, and a damned disinheriting countenance! an inveterate knave, depend on't. Don't you think so, [120 little Premium?

Sir Oliver S. Upon my soul, sir, I do not. I think it is as honest a looking face as any in the room, dead or alive. But I suppose uncle Oliver goes with the rest of the lumber? 125

Charles S. No, hang it! I'll not part with poor Noll. The old fellow has been very good to me, and, egad, I'll keep his picture while I've a room to put it in.

Sir Oliver S. The rogue's my nephew after [130 all! [*Aside.*] — But, sir, I have somehow taken a fancy to that picture.

Charles S. I'm sorry for't, for you certainly will not have it. Oons, have n't you got enough of them?

Sir Oliver S. I forgive him everything! [*Aside.*] But, sir, when I take a whim in my head I don't value money. I'll give you as much for that as for all the rest.

Charles S. Don't tease me, master broker. I tell you I'll not part with it, and there's an end of it.

Sir Oliver S. How like his father the dog is! [*Aside.*] — Well, well, I have done. — I did not perceive it before, but I think I never saw such a striking resemblance. [*Aside.*] — Here is a draft for your sum.

Charles S. Why, 't is for eight hundred pounds.

Sir Oliver S. You will not let Sir Oliver go?

Charles S. Zounds! no! I tell you once more.

Sir Oliver S. Then never mind the difference, we'll balance that another time. But give me your hand on the bargain; you are an honest fellow, Charles. I beg pardon, sir, for being so free. Come, Moses.

Charles S. Egad, this is a whimsical old fellow! But hark'ee, Premium, you'll prepare lodgings for these gentlemen?

Sir Oliver S. Yes, yes, I'll send for them in a day or two.

Charles S. But, hold; do now send a genteel conveyance for them, for, I assure you, they were most of them used to ride in their own carriages.

Sir Oliver S. I will, I will; for all but Oliver.

Charles S. Ay, all but the little nabob.

Sir Oliver S. You're fixed on that?

Charles S. Peremptorily.

Sir Oliver S. A dear extravagant rogue! [*Aside.*]

Good day! Come, Moses. Let me hear now who calls him profligate!

[*Exeunt* SIR OLIVER SURFACE *and* MOSES.

Careless. Why, this is the oddest genius of the sort I ever saw!

Charles S. Egad! he's the prince of brokers, I [170 think. I wonder how Moses got acquainted with so honest a fellow. Ha! here's Rowley; do, Careless, say I'll join the company in a few moments.

Careless. I will; but don't let that old blockhead persuade you to squander any of that money on [175 old musty debts, or any such nonsense; for tradesmen, Charles, are the most exorbitant fellows.

Charles S. Very true, and paying them is only encouraging them.

Careless. Nothing else. 180

Charles S. Ay, ay, never fear. [*Exit* CARELESS.] So! this was an odd old fellow, indeed. Let me see; two-thirds of this is mine by right, five hundred and thirty odd pounds. 'Fore heaven! I find one's ancestors are more valuable relations than I took them [185 for! Ladies and gentlemen, your most obedient and very grateful servant.

Enter ROWLEY.

Ha! old Rowley; egad, you are just come in time to take leave of your old acquaintance.

Rowley. Yes, I heard they were a going. But [190 I wonder you can have such spirits under so many distresses.

Charles S. Why, there's the point! my distresses are so many, that I can't afford to part with my spirits; but I shall be rich and splenetic, all in [195 good time. However, I suppose you are surprised that

I am not more sorrowful at parting with so many near relations; to be sure 't is very affecting; but you see they never move a muscle, so why should I?

Rowley. There's no making you serious a mo- [200 ment.

Charles S. Yes, faith, I am so now. Here, my honest Rowley, here, get me this changed directly, and take a hundred pounds of it immediately to old Stanley. 205

Rowley. A hundred pounds! Consider only ——

Charles S. Gad's life, don't talk about it; poor Stanley's wants are pressing, and if you don't make haste, we shall have some one call that has a better right to the money. 210

Rowley. Ah! there's the point! I never will cease dunning you with the old proverb ——

Charles S. "Be just before you're generous." Why, so I would if I could; but Justice is an old, lame, hobbling beldame, and I can't get her to keep pace [215 with Generosity for the soul of me.

Rowley. Yet, Charles, believe me, one hour's reflection ——

Charles S. Ay, ay, it's all very true; but, hark'ee, Rowley, while I have, by heaven, I'll give; so [220 damn your economy, and now for hazard. [*Exeunt.*

204. **take a hundred pounds of it.** "In a note to an anonymous pamphlet biographical sketch of Sheridan, published in 1799, there is quoted a remark of a lady which is not without point and pertinency: 'Mr. Sheridan is a fool if he pays a bill (of which, by the by, he is not accused) of one of the tradesmen who received his comedy with such thunders of applause. He ought to tell them in the words of Charles, that he could never make Justice keep pace with Generosity, and they could have no right to complain.'" (Matthews.)

SCENE II. *The Parlour.*

Enter Sir OLIVER SURFACE *and* MOSES.

Moses. Well, sir, I think, as Sir Peter said, you have seen Mr. Charles in high glory; 't is great pity he 's so extravagant.

Sir Oliver S. True, but he would not sell my picture.

Moses. And loves wine and women so much.

Sir Oliver S. But he would not sell my picture.

Moses. And games so deep.

Sir Oliver S. But he would not sell my picture. O, here 's Rowley.

Enter ROWLEY.

Rowley. So, Sir Oliver, I find you have made a purchase ——

Sir Oliver S. Yes, yes; our young rake has parted with his ancestors like old tapestry.

Rowley. And here has he commissioned me to re-deliver you part of the purchase money. I mean, though, in your necessitous character of old Stanley.

Moses. Ah! there is the pity of it all; he is so damned charitable.

Rowley. And I left a hosier and two tailors in the hall, who, I'm sure, won't be paid, and this hundred would satisfy them.

Sir Oliver S. Well, well, I'll pay his debts, and his benevolence too. But now I am no more a broker, and you shall introduce me to the elder brother as old Stanley.

Rowley. Not yet a while; Sir Peter, I know, means to call there about this time.

Enter Trip.

Trip. O, gentlemen, I beg pardon for not showing you out; this way. Moses, a word.

[*Exeunt* Trip *and* Moses.

Sir Oliver S. There's a fellow for you! Would you believe it, that puppy intercepted the Jew on our coming, and wanted to raise money before he got to his master.

Rowley. Indeed!

Sir Oliver S. Yes, they are now planning an annuity business. Ah! Master Rowley, in my days servants were content with the follies of their masters, when they were worn a little threadbare; but now, they have their vices, like their birthday clothes, with the [40 gloss on. [*Exeunt.*

Scene III. *A Library.*

Discovered Joseph Surface *and a* Servant.

Joseph S. No letter from Lady Teazle?

Serv. No, sir.

Joseph S. I am surprised she has not sent, if she is prevented from coming. Sir Peter certainly does not suspect me. Yet, I wish I may not lose the heiress, [5 through the scrape I have drawn myself into with the wife; however, Charles's imprudence and bad character are great points in my favour. [*Knocking heard without.*

Serv. Sir, I believe that must be Lady Teazle.

Joseph S. Hold! See whether it is or not before [10 you go to the door: I have a particular message for you, if it should be my brother.

Serv. 'T is her ladyship, sir; she always leaves her chair at the milliner's in the next street.

Joseph S. Stay, stay; draw that screen before [15

the window — that will do; my opposite neighbour is a maiden lady of so anxious a temper. [SERVANT *draws the screen, and exit.*] I have a difficult hand to play in this affair. Lady Teazle has lately suspected my views on Maria; but she must by no means be let into [20 that secret — at least, till I have her more in my power.

Enter LADY TEAZLE.

Lady T. What, sentiment in soliloquy now? Have you been very impatient? O Lud! don't pretend to look grave. I vow I could n't come before.

Joseph S. O, madam, punctuality is a species of [25 constancy, a very unfashionable quality in a lady.

Lady T. Upon my word you ought to pity me. Do you know, Sir Peter is grown so ill-natured to me of late, and so jealous of Charles too; that's the best of the story, is n't it? 30

Joseph S. I am glad my scandalous friends keep that up. [*Aside.*

Lady T. I am sure I wish he would let Maria marry him, and then perhaps he would be convinced. Don't you, Mr. Surface? 35

Joseph S. Indeed I do not. [*Aside.*] — Oh, certainly I do! for then my dear Lady Teazle would also be convinced how wrong her suspicions were of my having any design on the silly girl.

Lady T. Well, well, I'm inclined to believe you. [40 But is n't it provoking, to have the most ill-natured things said of one? And there's my friend, Lady Sneerwell, has circulated I don't know how many scandalous tales of me, and all without any foundation too; that's what vexes me. 45

Joseph S. Ay, madam, to be sure, that is the provoking circumstance — without foundation. Yes, yes,

there's the mortification, indeed; for when a scandalous story is believed against one, there certainly is no comfort like the consciousness of having deserved it. [50

Lady T. No, to be sure, then I'd forgive their malice; but to attack me, who am really so innocent, and who never say an ill-natured thing of anybody — that is, of any friend; and then Sir Peter too, to have him so peevish, and so suspicious, when I know the integ- [55 rity of my own heart! indeed 't is monstrous!

Joseph S. But, my dear Lady Teazle, 't is your own fault if you suffer it. When a husband entertains a groundless suspicion of his wife, and withdraws his confidence from her, the original compact is bro- [60 ken, and she owes it to the honour of her sex to outwit him.

Lady T. Indeed! so that if he suspects me without cause, it follows, that the best way of curing his jealousy is to give him reason for 't. 65

Joseph S. Undoubtedly; for your husband should never be deceived in you; and in that case it becomes you to be frail in compliment to his discernment.

Lady T. To be sure, what you say is very reasonable, and when the consciousness of my inno- [70 cence ——

Joseph S. Ah! my dear madam, there is the great mistake: 't is this very conscious innocence that is of the greatest prejudice to you. What is it makes you negligent of forms, and careless of the world's [75 opinion? Why, the consciousness of your own innocence. What makes you thoughtless in your own conduct, and apt to run into a thousand little imprudences? Why, the consciousness of your own innocence. What makes you impatient of Sir Peter's [80

temper, and outrageous of his suspicions? Why, the consciousness of your innocence.

Lady T. 'T is very true!

Joseph S. Now, my dear Lady Teazle, if you would but once make a trifling *faux pas*, you can't con- [85 ceive how cautious you would grow, and how ready to humour and agree with your husband.

Lady T. Do you think so?

Joseph S. Oh! I'm sure on't; and then you would find all scandal would cease at once; for, in short, [90 your character at present is like a person in a plethora, absolutely dying from too much health.

Lady T. So, so; then I perceive your prescription is, that I must sin in my own defence, and part with my virtue to secure my reputation? 95

Joseph S. Exactly so, upon my credit, ma'am.

Lady T. Well, certainly this is the oddest doctrine and the newest receipt for avoiding calumny!

Joseph S. An infallible one, believe me. Prudence, like experience, must be paid for. 100

Lady T. Why, if my understanding were once convinced ——

Joseph S. O, certainly, madam, your understanding should be convinced. Yes, yes; heaven forbid I should persuade you to do anything you thought [105 wrong. No, no, I have too much honour to desire it.

91. **person in a plethora.** " A Plethoric Patient is such an one, as is not yet sick, but at the same time is in such a State of Plenitude, that, if the Humors are more increased or rarefied by Heat, or any other Cause, the natural Functions are, by these means, injured. Hence a Plethoric Person may be sound, though at the same time in the greatest danger." (*A Medicinal Dictionary*, by R. James, M.D., London, 1743–45.)

Lady T. Don't you think we may as well leave *honour* out of the question?

Joseph S. Ah! the ill effects of your country [110 education, I see, still remain with you.

Lady T. I doubt they do indeed; and I will fairly own to you, that if I could be persuaded to do wrong, it would be by Sir Peter's ill usage sooner than your *honourable logic*, after all. 115

Joseph S. Then, by this hand, which he is unworthy of —— [*Taking her hand.*

Enter Servant.

'S death, you blockhead! What do you want?

Serv. I beg your pardon, sir, but I thought you would not choose Sir Peter to come up without [120 announcing him.

Joseph S. Sir Peter! Oons — the devil!

Lady T. Sir Peter! O Lud, I'm ruined! I'm ruined!

Serv. Sir, 't was n't I let him in. 125

Lady T. Oh, I'm quite undone! What will become of me? Now, Mr. Logic. Oh! he's on the stairs. I'll get behind here; and if ever I'm so imprudent again —— [*Goes behind the screen.*

Joseph S. Give me that book. 130

[*Sits down. Servant pretends to adjust his hair.*

Enter Sir Peter.

Sir Peter T. Ay, ever improving himself. Mr. Surface! Mr. Surface!

Joseph S. Oh! my dear Sir Peter, I beg your pardon. [*Gaping, throws away the book.*] I have been dozing over a stupid book. Well, I am much obliged to [135 you for this call. You have n't been here, I believe,

since I fitted up this room. Books, you know, are the only things in which I am a coxcomb.

Sir Peter T. 'T is very neat indeed. Well, well, that's proper; and you can make even your [140 screen a source of knowledge; hung, I perceive, with maps.

Joseph S. O, yes, I find great use in that screen.

Sir Peter T. I dare say you must, certainly, when you want to find anything in a hurry. 145

Joseph S. Ay, or to hide anything in a hurry, either. [*Aside.*

Sir Peter T. Well, I have a little private business —

Joseph S. [*to the* SERVANT.] You need not stay.

Serv. No, sir. [*Exit.* 150

Joseph S. Here 's a chair, Sir Peter. I beg ——

Sir Peter T. Well, now we are alone, there is a subject, my dear friend, on which I wish to unburden my mind to you — a point of the greatest moment to my peace; in short, my dear friend, Lady Teazle's [155 conduct of late has made me extremely unhappy.

Joseph S. Indeed! I am very sorry to hear it.

Sir Peter T. Ay, 't is too plain she has not the least regard for me; but, what 's worse, I have pretty good authority to suppose she has formed an at- [160 tachment to another.

Joseph S. Indeed! you astonish me!

Sir Peter T. Yes; and, between ourselves, I think I've discovered the person.

Joseph S. How! you alarm me exceedingly. 165

Sir Peter T. Ay, my dear friend, I knew you would sympathize with me!

Joseph S. Yes, believe me, Sir Peter, such a discovery would hurt me just as much as it would you.

Sir Peter T. I am convinced of it. Ah! it is a happiness to have a friend whom we can trust even with one's family secrets. But have you no guess who I mean?

Joseph S. I have n't the most distant idea. It can't be Sir Benjamin Backbite!

Sir Peter T. Oh, no! What say you to Charles?

Joseph S. My brother! impossible!

Sir Peter T. Oh! my dear friend, the goodness of your own heart misleads you. You judge of others by yourself.

Joseph S. Certainly, Sir Peter, the heart that is conscious of its own integrity is ever slow to credit another's treachery.

Sir Peter T. True; but your brother has no sentiment; you never hear him talk so.

Joseph S. Yet I can't but think Lady Teazle herself has too much principle.

Sir Peter T. Ay; but what is principle against the flattery of a handsome, lively young fellow?

Joseph S. That's very true.

Sir Peter T. And there's, you know, the difference of our ages makes it very improbable that she should have any very great affection for me; and if she were to be frail, and I were to make it public, why the town would only laugh at me, the foolish old bachelor, who had married a girl.

Joseph S. That's true, to be sure; they would laugh.

Sir Peter T. Laugh — ay, and make ballads, and paragraphs, and the devil knows what of me.

Joseph S. No; you must never make it public.

Sir Peter T. But then again — that the nephew of

my old friend, Sir Oliver, should be the person to attempt such a wrong, hurts me more nearly.

Joseph S. Ay, there's the point. When ingrat- [205 itude barbs the dart of injury, the wound has double danger in it.

Sir Peter T. Ay, I, that was, in a manner, left his guardian; in whose house he had been so often entertained; who never in my life denied him — [210 my advice.

Joseph S. O, 't is not to be credited. There may be a man capable of such baseness, to be sure; but, for my part, till you can give me positive proofs, I cannot but doubt it. However, if it should be proved on [215 him, he is no longer a brother of mine. I disclaim kindred with him; for the man who can break the laws of hospitality, and tempt the wife of his friend, deserves to be branded as the pest of society.

Sir Peter T. What a difference there is be- [220 tween you! What noble sentiments!

Joseph S. Yet, I cannot suspect Lady Teazle's honour.

Sir Peter T. I am sure I wish to think well of her, and to remove all ground of quarrel between us. [225 She has lately reproached me more than once with having made no settlement on her; and, in our last quarrel, she almost hinted that she should not break her heart if I was dead. Now, as we seem to differ in our ideas of expense, I have resolved she shall have her own [230 way, and be her own mistress in that respect for the future; and if I were to die, she will find I have not been inattentive to her interest while living. Here, my friend, are the drafts of the two deeds, which I wish to have your opinion on. By one, she will enjoy eight [235

hundred a year independent while I live; and, by the other, the bulk of my fortune at my death.

Joseph S. This conduct, Sir Peter, is indeed truly generous. I wish it may not corrupt my pupil. [*Aside.*

Sir Peter T. Yes, I am determined she shall have [240 no cause to complain, though I would not have her acquainted with the latter instance of my affection yet awhile.

Joseph S. Nor I, if I could help it. [*Aside.*

Sir Peter T. And now, my dear friend, if you [245 please, we will talk over the situation of your affairs with Maria.

Joseph S. [*Softly.*] O, no, Sir Peter; another time, if you please.

Sir Peter T. I am sensibly chagrined at the lit- [250 tle progress you seem to make in her affections.

Joseph S. I beg you will not mention it. What are my disappointments when your happiness is in debate! [*Softly.*] — 'S death, I shall be ruined every way. [*Aside.* 255

Sir Peter T. And though you are so averse to my acquainting Lady Teazle with your passion for Maria, I'm sure she's not your enemy in the affair.

Joseph S. Pray, Sir Peter, now, oblige me. I am really too much affected by the subject we have [260 been speaking of, to bestow a thought on my own concerns. The man who is intrusted with his friend's distresses can never ——

Enter Servant.

Well, sir?

Serv. Your brother, sir, is speaking to a gentle- [265 man in the street, and says he knows you are within.

Joseph S. 'S death, blockhead, I'm not within; I'm out for the day.

Sir Peter T. Stay — hold — a thought has struck me: you shall be at home.

Joseph S. Well, well, let him up. [*Exit* SERVANT.] He'll interrupt Sir Peter, however. [*Aside.*

Sir Peter T. Now, my good friend, oblige me, I entreat you. Before Charles comes, let me conceal myself somewhere; then do you tax him on the point we have been talking, and his answer may satisfy me at once.

Joseph S. O fie, Sir Peter! would you have me join in so mean a trick? — to trepan my brother, too?

Sir Peter T. Nay, you tell me you are sure he is innocent; if so, you do him the greatest service by giving him an opportunity to clear himself, and you will set my heart at rest. Come, you shall not refuse me; here, behind this screen will be — Hey! what the devil! there seems to be one listener there already. I'll swear I saw a petticoat!

Joseph S. Ha! ha! ha! Well, this is ridiculous enough. I'll tell you, Sir Peter, though I hold a man of intrigue to be a most despicable character, yet, you know, it does not follow that one is to be an absolute Joseph either! Hark'ee, 't is a little French milliner — a silly rogue that plagues me — and having some character to lose, on your coming, sir, she ran behind the screen.

Sir Peter T. Ah! you rogue! But egad, she has overheard all I have been saying of my wife.

279. **trepan,** entrap, ensnare. Probably originating in thieves' slang; now obsolete or archaic. The original spelling, *trapan,* was changed through some figurative association with the word in its earlier and better known surgical or mechanical significance.

290–91. **absolute Joseph:** a reference to Joseph and Potiphar's wife, Genesis 39.

Joseph S. O, 't will never go any farther, you may depend upon it.

Sir Peter T. No; then, faith, let her hear it out. Here's a closet will do as well.

Joseph S. Well, go in there.

Sir Peter T. Sly rogue! sly rogue! [*Going into the closet.*

Joseph S. A narrow escape, indeed! and a curious situation I'm in, to part man and wife in this manner.

Lady T. [*Peeping.*] Could n't I steal off?

Joseph S. Keep close, my angel!

Sir Peter T. [*Peeping.*] Joseph, tax him home.

Joseph S. Back, my dear friend!

Lady T. [*Peeping.*] Could n't you lock Sir Peter in?

Joseph S. Be still, my life!

Sir Peter T. [*Peeping.*] You're sure the little milliner won't blab?

Joseph S. In, in, my good Sir Peter. 'Fore Gad, I wish I had a key to the door.

Enter Charles Surface.

Charles S. Holloa! brother, what has been the matter? Your fellow would not let me up at first. What! have you had a Jew or a wench with you?

Joseph S. Neither, brother, I assure you.

Charles S. But what has made Sir Peter steal off? I thought he had been with you.

Joseph S. He *was*, brother; but hearing you were coming, he did not choose to stay.

Charles S. What! was the old gentleman afraid I wanted to borrow money of him?

Joseph S. No, sir; but I am sorry to find, Charles, you have lately given that worthy man grounds for great uneasiness.

Charles S. Yes, they tell me I do that to a great many worthy men. But how so, pray?

Joseph S. To be plain with you, brother, he thinks you are endeavouring to gain Lady Teazle's affections from him.

Charles S. Who, I? O Lud! not I, upon my word. Ha! ha! ha! ha! so the old fellow has found out that he has got a young wife, has he? Or, what is worse, Lady Teazle has found out she has an old husband?

Joseph S. This is no subject to jest on, brother. He who can laugh ——

Charles S. True, true, as you were going to say — then, seriously, I never had the least idea of what you charge me with, upon my honour.

Joseph S. Well, it will give Sir Peter great satisfaction to hear this. [*Raising his voice.*

Charles S. To be sure, I once thought the lady seemed to have taken a fancy to me; but, upon my soul, I never gave her the least encouragement; besides, you know my attachment to Maria.

Joseph S. But sure, brother, even if Lady Teazle had betrayed the fondest partiality for you ——

Charles S. Why, look'ee, Joseph, I hope I shall never deliberately do a dishonourable action; but if a pretty woman was purposely to throw herself in my way; and that pretty woman married to a man old enough to be her father ——

Joseph S. Well ——

Charles S. Why, I believe I should be obliged to borrow a little of your morality, that's all. But, brother, do you know now that you surprise me exceedingly, by naming *me* with Lady Teazle? for, 'faith, I always understood you were her favourite.

Joseph S. O, for shame, Charles! This retort is foolish.

Charles S. Nay, I swear I have seen you exchange such significant glances ——

Joseph S. Nay, nay, sir, this is no jest.

Charles S. Egad, I'm serious. Don't you remember one day when I called here ——

Joseph S. Nay, prithee, Charles ——

Charles S. And found you together ——

Joseph S. Zounds, sir! I insist ——

Charles S. And another time when your servant ——

Joseph S. Brother, brother, a word with you! Gad, I must stop him. [*Aside.*

Charles S. Informed, I say, that ——

Joseph S. Hush! I beg your pardon, but Sir Peter has overheard all we have been saying. I knew you would clear yourself, or I should not have consented.

Charles S. How, Sir Peter! Where is he?

Joseph S. Softly; there! [*Points to the closet.*

Charles S. O, 'fore heaven, I'll have him out. Sir Peter, come forth!

Joseph S. No, no ——

Charles S. I say, Sir Peter, come into court. [*Pulls in* Sir Peter.] What! my old guardian! What! turn inquisitor, and take evidence incog.?

Sir Peter T. Give me your hand, Charles. I believe I have suspected you wrongfully; but you must n't be angry with Joseph; 't was my plan!

Charles S. Indeed!

Sir Peter T. But I acquit you. I promise you I don't think near so ill of you as I did. What I have heard has given me great satisfaction.

Charles S. Egad, then, 't was lucky you did n't [395 hear any more; was n't it, Joseph? [*Apart to* JOSEPH.

Sir Peter T. Ah! you would have retorted on him.

Charles S. Ay, ay, that was a joke.

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, I know his honour too well.

Charles S. But you might as well have sus- [400 pected *him* as *me* in this matter, for all that; might n't he, Joseph? [*Apart to* JOSEPH.

Sir Peter T. Well, well, I believe you.

Joseph S. Would they were both well out of the room! [*Aside.* [405

Enter SERVANT, *and whispers* JOSEPH SURFACE.

Sir Peter T. And in future perhaps we may not be such strangers.

Joseph S. Gentlemen, I beg pardon, I must wait on you downstairs; here is a person come on particular business. 410

Charles S. Well, you can see him in another room. Sir Peter and I have not met a long time, and I have something to say to him.

Joseph S. They must not be left together. [*Aside.*] I'll send this man away, and return directly. Sir [415 Peter, not a word of the French milliner.

[*Apart to* Sir PETER, *and goes out.*

Sir Peter T. I! not for the world! [*Apart to* JOSEPH.] Ah! Charles, if you associated more with your brother, one might indeed hope for your reformation. He is a man of sentiment. Well, there is [420 nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment.

Charles S. Pshaw! he is too moral by half, and so apprehensive of his good name, as he calls it, that I suppose he would as soon let a priest into his house as a girl. 425

Sir Peter T. No, no; come, come; you wrong him. No, no! Joseph is no rake, but he is no such saint either in that respect. — I have a great mind to tell him; we should have a laugh at Joseph. [*Aside.*

Charles S. Oh, hang him! He's a very ancho- [430 rite, a young hermit.

Sir Peter T. Hark'ee; you must not abuse him; he may chance to hear of it again, I promise you.

Charles S. Why, you won't tell him?

Sir Peter T. No — but — this way. Egad, I'll [435 tell him. [*Aside.*] Hark'ee; have you a mind to have a good laugh at Joseph?

Charles S. I should like it of all things.

Sir Peter T. Then, i' faith, we will; I'll be quit with him for discovering me. He had a girl with him [440 when I called.

Charles S. What! Joseph? you jest.

Sir Peter T. Hush! a little French milliner, and the best of the jest is, she's in the room now.

Charles S. The devil she is! 445

Sir Peter T. Hush! I tell you! [*Points.*

Charles S. Behind the screen! 'S life, let's unveil her!

Sir Peter T. No, no — he's coming — you sha'n't, indeed! 450

Charles S. O, egad, we'll have a peep at the little milliner!

Sir Peter T. Not for the world; Joseph will never forgive me ——

Charles S. I'll stand by you —— 455

Sir Peter T. Odds, here he is.

Joseph Surface *enters just as* Charles Surface *throws down the screen.*

Charles S. Lady Teazle, by all that's wonderful!

Sir Peter T. Lady Teazle, by all that's damnable!

Charles S. Sir Peter, this is one of the smartest French milliners I ever saw. Egad, you seem all [460 to have been diverting yourselves here at hide and seek, and I don't see who is out of the secret. Shall I beg your ladyship to inform me? Not a word! Brother, will you be pleased to explain this matter? What! is Morality dumb too? Sir Peter, though [465 I found you in the dark, perhaps you are not so now! All mute! Well, though I can make nothing of the affair, I suppose you perfectly understand one another, so I'll leave you to yourselves. [*Going.*] Brother, I'm sorry to find you have given that worthy man [470 cause for so much uneasiness. Sir Peter! there's nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment!

[*Exit* CHARLES.

[*They stand for some time looking at each other.*

Joseph S. Sir Peter — notwithstanding — I confess — that appearances are against me — if you will afford me your patience — I make no doubt — but [475 I shall explain everything to your satisfaction.

Sir Peter T. If you please, sir.

Joseph S. The fact is, sir, that Lady Teazle, knowing my pretensions to your ward Maria — I say, sir, Lady Teazle, being apprehensive of the jealousy of [480 your temper — and knowing my friendship to the family — She, sir, I say — called here — in order that — I might explain these pretensions — but on your coming — being apprehensive — as I said — of your jealousy — she withdrew — and this, you may [485 depend on it, is the whole truth of the matter.

Sir Peter T. A very clear account, upon my word; and I dare swear the lady will vouch for every article of it.

Lady T. For not one word of it, Sir Peter! [490

Sir Peter T. How! don't you think it worth while to agree in the lie?

Lady T. There is not one syllable of truth in what that gentleman has told you. 494

Sir Peter T. I believe you, upon my soul, ma'am!

Joseph S. [*Aside to Lady Teazle.*] 'S death, madam, will you betray me?

Lady T. Good Mr. Hypocrite, by your leave, I'll speak for myself.

Sir Peter T. Ay, let her alone, sir; you'll find [500 she'll make out a better story than you, without prompting.

Lady T. Hear me, Sir Peter! I came hither on no matter relating to your ward, and even ignorant of this gentleman's pretensions to her. But I came [505 seduced by his insidious arguments, at least to listen to his pretended passion, if not to sacrifice your honour to his baseness.

Sir Peter T. Now, I believe, the truth is coming indeed! 510

Joseph S. The woman's mad!

Lady T. No, sir, she has recovered her senses, and your own arts have furnished her with the means. Sir Peter, I do not expect you to credit me, but the tenderness you expressed for me, when I am sure [515 you could not think I was a witness to it, has penetrated so to my heart, that had I left the place without the shame of this discovery, my future life should have spoken the sincerity of my gratitude. As for that smooth-tongued hypocrite, who would have [520 seduced the wife of his too credulous friend, while he affected honourable addresses to his ward, I behold

him now in a light so truly despicable, that I shall never again respect myself for having listened to him.

[*Exit* Lady TEAZLE.

Joseph S. Notwithstanding all this, Sir Peter, [525 Heaven knows ——

Sir Peter T. That you are a villain! and so I leave you to your conscience.

Joseph S. You are too rash, Sir Peter; you shall hear me. The man who shuts out conviction by re- [530 fusing to ——

[*Exeunt* Sir PETER *and* SURFACE *talking.*

ACT V

SCENE I. *The Library in* JOSEPH SURFACE'S *House.*

Enter JOSEPH SURFACE *and* SERVANT.

Joseph S. Mr. Stanley? and why should you think I would see him? you must know he comes to ask something.

Serv. Sir, I should not have let him in, but that Mr. Rowley came to the door with him. 5

Joseph S. Pshaw! blockhead! to suppose that I should now be in a temper to receive visits from poor relations! Well, why don't you show the fellow up?

Serv. I will, sir. Why, sir, it was not my fault that Sir Peter discovered my lady —— 10

Joseph S. Go, fool! [*Exit* SERVANT.] Sure Fortune never played a man of my policy such a trick before. My character with Sir Peter, my hopes with Maria, destroyed in a moment! I'm in a rare humour to listen to other people's distresses! I sha'n't be able to [15 bestow even a benevolent sentiment on Stanley. So! here he comes, and Rowley with him. I must try to

recover myself, and put a little charity into my face, however. [*Exit.*

Enter Sir Oliver Surface *and* Rowley.

Sir Oliver S. What! does he avoid us? That [20 was he, was it not?

Rowley. It was, sir. But I doubt you are come a little too abruptly. His nerves are so weak, that the sight of a poor relation may be too much for him. I should have gone first to break it to him. 25

Sir Oliver S. O, plague of his nerves! Yet this is he whom Sir Peter extols as a man of the most benevolent way of thinking!

Rowley. As to his way of thinking, I cannot pretend to decide; for, to do him justice, he appears to [30 have as much speculative benevolence as any private gentleman in the kingdom, though he is seldom so sensual as to indulge himself in the exercise of it.

Sir Oliver S. Yet has a string of charitable sentiments at his fingers' ends. 35

Rowley. Or rather at his tongue's end, Sir Oliver; for I believe there is no sentiment he has such faith in, as that "Charity begins at home."

Sir Oliver S. And his, I presume, is of that domestic sort which never stirs abroad at all? 40

Rowley. I doubt you'll find it so; but he's coming. I must n't seem to interrupt you; and, you know, immediately as you leave him, I come in to announce your arrival in your real character.

Sir Oliver S. True; and afterwards you'll meet [45 me at Sir Peter's.

Rowley. Without losing a moment. [*Exit.*

Sir Oliver S. I don't like the complaisance of his features.

Enter JOSEPH SURFACE.

Joseph S. Sir, I beg you ten thousand pardons [50 for keeping you a moment waiting. Mr. Stanley, I presume.

Sir Oliver S. At your service.

Joseph S. Sir, I beg you will do me the honour to sit down. I entreat you, sir! 55

Sir Oliver S. Dear sir, there's no occasion. — Too civil by half! [*Aside.*

Joseph S. I have not the pleasure of knowing you, Mr. Stanley, but I am extremely happy to see you look so well. You were nearly related to my mo- [60 ther, I think, Mr. Stanley?

Sir Oliver S. I was, sir; so nearly, that my present poverty, I fear, may do discredit to her wealthy children, else I should not have presumed to trouble you. 65

Joseph S. Dear sir, there needs no apology; he that is in distress, though a stranger, has a right to claim kindred with the wealthy. I am sure I wish I was of that class, and had it in my power to offer you even a small relief. 70

Sir Oliver S. If your uncle, Sir Oliver, were here, I should have a friend.

Joseph S. I wish he was, sir, with all my heart: you should not want an advocate with him, believe me, sir. 75

Sir Oliver S. I should not need one — my distresses would recommend me. But I imagined his bounty would enable you to become the agent of his charity.

Joseph S. My dear sir, you were strangely misinformed. Sir Oliver is a worthy man, a very [80 worthy man; but avarice, Mr. Stanley, is the vice of age. I will tell you, my good sir, in confidence, what

he has done for me has been a mere nothing; though people, I know, have thought otherwise, and, for my part, I never chose to contradict the report.

Sir Oliver S. What! has he never transmitted you bullion — rupees — pagodas?

Joseph S. O, dear sir, nothing of the kind. No, no; a few presents, now and then — china, shawls, congou tea, avadavats, and Indian crackers; little [90 more, believe me.

Sir Oliver S. Here's gratitude for twelve thousand pounds! Avadavats and Indian crackers! [*Aside.*

Joseph S. Then, my dear sir, you have heard, I doubt not, of the extravagance of my brother; [95 there are very few would credit what I have done for that unfortunate young man.

Sir Oliver S. Not I, for one! [*Aside.*

Joseph S. The sums I have lent him! Indeed I have been exceedingly to blame; it was an amiable [100 weakness; however, I don't pretend to defend it; and now I feel it doubly culpable, since it has deprived

87. **rupees**: the principal silver coins of British India, valued in Sheridan's time at about two shillings.

87. **pagodas**: gold or silver coins formerly current in India, and varying in value from seven to eight shillings. So called because bearing upon the reverse the image of a pagoda, or idol.

89–90. **congou tea**: "well worked" tea. A black tea of higher grade than the Bohea commonly used in England during the eighteenth century.

90. **avadavats**: a word corrupted from *amadavat*. A small Indian songbird, called also the strawberry finch, from the crimson coloring of the male.

90. **Indian crackers.** Editors have usually understood this to mean firecrackers, wrapped in a style peculiar to India, and hence something of a curiosity in England. These would seem a somewhat puerile gift, however; and it may reasonably be surmised that what Joseph's uncle really sent were Indian parrots. Cf. *Century Dictionary*.

me of the pleasure of serving you, Mr. Stanley, as my heart dictates.

Sir Oliver S. Dissembler! [*Aside.*] — Then, sir, [105 you can't assist me?

Joseph S. At present, it grieves me to say, I cannot; but, whenever I have the ability, you may depend upon hearing from me.

Sir Oliver S. I am extremely sorry —— 110

Joseph S. Not more than I, believe me; to pity without the power to relieve, is still more painful than to ask and be denied.

Sir Oliver S. Kind sir, your most obedient humble servant. 115

Joseph S. You leave me deeply affected, Mr. Stanley. William, be ready to open the door.

Sir Oliver S. O, dear sir, no ceremony.

Joseph S. Your very obedient.

Sir Oliver S. Sir, your most obsequious. 120

Joseph S. You may depend upon hearing from me, whenever I can be of service.

Sir Oliver S. Sweet sir, you are too good!

Joseph S. In the mean time I wish you health and spirits. 125

Sir Oliver S. Your ever grateful and perpetual humble servant.

Joseph S. Sir, yours as sincerely.

Sir Oliver S. Charles, you are my heir! [*Aside. Exit.*

Joseph S. This is one bad effect of a good char- [130 acter; it invites application from the unfortunate, and there needs no small degree of address to gain the reputation of benevolence without incurring the expense. The silver ore of pure charity is an expensive article in the catalogue of a man's good qualities; [135

whereas the sentimental French plate I use instead of it makes just as good a show, and pays no tax.

Enter Rowley.

Rowley. Mr. Surface, your servant. I was apprehensive of interrupting you, though my business demands immediate attention, as this note will in- [140
form you.

Joseph S. Always happy to see Mr. Rowley. [*Reads the letter.*] Sir Oliver Surface! My uncle arrived!

Rowley. He is, indeed; we have just parted — quite well, after a speedy voyage, and impatient to em- [145
brace his worthy nephew.

Joseph S. I am astonished! William! stop Mr. Stanley, if he's not gone.

Rowley. Oh! he's out of reach, I believe.

Joseph S. Why did you not let me know this [150
when you came in together?

Rowley. I thought you had particular business; but I must be gone to inform your brother, and appoint him here to meet your uncle. He will be with you in a quarter of an hour. 155

Joseph S. So he says. Well, I am strangely overjoyed at his coming. — Never, to be sure, was anything so damned unlucky. [*Aside.*

Rowley. You will be delighted to see how well he looks. 160

136–37. **French plate . . . makes just as good a show, and pays no tax.** In 1756 a tax "was charged upon private individuals and corporations possessed of plate [solid silver] over a certain amount in value; taking the possession of plate as evidence of capability to pay a tax." (Dowell's *History of Taxation in England.*) Evidently the reference is to this tax, which was repealed in 1777. The French plate, being merely an imitation of solid plate, did not indicate the owner's capability of paying a tax and, therefore, was not an expensive possession.

Joseph S. Ah! I'm rejoiced to hear it. —— Just at this time! [*Aside.*

Rowley. I'll tell him how impatiently you expect him.

Joseph S. Do, do; pray give my best duty and [165 affection. Indeed, I cannot express the sensations I feel at the thought of seeing him. [*Exit* ROWLEY.] Certainly his coming just at this time is the cruellest piece of ill fortune! [*Exit.*

SCENE II. Sir PETER TEAZLE'S.

Enter Mrs. CANDOUR *and* MAID.

Maid. Indeed, ma'am, my lady will see nobody at present.

Mrs. Can. Did you tell her it was her friend Mrs. Candour?

Maid. Yes, ma'am; but she begs you will ex- [5 cuse her.

Mrs. Can. Do go again; I shall be glad to see her, if it be only for a moment, for I am sure she must be in great distress. [*Exit* MAID.] Dear heart, how provoking! I'm not mistress of half the circum- [10 stances! We shall have the whole affair in the newspapers, with the names of the parties at length, before I have dropped the story at a dozen houses.

Enter Sir BENJAMIN BACKBITE.

Oh, Sir Benjamin, you have heard, I suppose ——

Sir Benj. B. Of Lady Teazle and Mr. Surface ——[15

Mrs. Can. And Sir Peter's discovery ——

Sir Benj. B. O! the strangest piece of business, to be sure!

Mrs. Can. Well, I never was so surprised in my life. I am so sorry for all parties, indeed. 20

Sir Benj. B. Now, I don't pity Sir Peter at all; he was so extravagantly partial to Mr. Surface.

Mrs. Can. Mr. Surface! Why, 't was with Charles Lady Teazle was detected.

Sir Benj. B. No, no, I tell you; Mr. Surface is the gallant.

Mrs. Can. No such thing! Charles is the man. 'T was Mr. Surface brought Sir Peter on purpose to discover them.

Sir Benj. B. I tell you I had it from one —

Mrs. Can. And I have it from one —

Sir Benj. B. Who had it from one, who had it —

Mrs. Can. From one immediately — but here comes Lady Sneerwell; perhaps she knows the whole affair.

Enter Lady Sneerwell.

Lady Sneer. So, my dear Mrs. Candour, here's a sad affair of our friend, Lady Teazle.

Mrs. Can. Ay, my dear friend, who would have thought ——

Lady Sneer. Well, there is no trusting appearances; though, indeed, she was always too lively for me.

Mrs. Can. To be sure, her manners were a little too free; but then she was young!

Lady Sneer. And had, indeed, some good qualities.

Mrs. Can. So she had, indeed. But have you heard the particulars?

Lady Sneer. No; but everybody says that Mr. Surface ——

Sir Benj. B. Ay, there; I told you Mr. Surface was the man.

Mrs. Can. No, no; indeed the assignation was with Charles.

Lady Sneer. With Charles! You alarm me, Mrs. Candour!

Mrs. Can. Yes, yes, he was the lover. Mr. Surface, to do him justice, was only the informer. [55

Sir Benj. B. Well, I'll not dispute with you, Mrs. Candour; but, be it which it may, I hope that Sir Peter's wound will not ——

Mrs. Can. Sir Peter's wound! O, mercy! I did n't hear a word of their fighting. 60

Lady Sneer. Nor I, a syllable.

Sir Benj. B. No! what, no mention of the duel?

Mrs. Can. Not a word.

Sir Benj. B. O, yes; they fought before they left the room. 65

Lady Sneer. Pray, let us hear.

Mrs. Can. Ay, do oblige us with the duel.

Sir Benj. B. "Sir," says Sir Peter, immediately after the discovery, "you are a most ungrateful fellow."

Mrs. Can. Ay, to Charles. 70

Sir Benj. B. No, no, to Mr. Surface — "a most ungrateful fellow; and, old as I am, sir," says he, "I insist on immediate satisfaction."

Mrs. Can. Ay, that must have been to Charles; for 't is very unlikely Mr. Surface should fight in his [75 own house.

Sir Benj. B. Gad's life, ma'am, not at all. "Giving me satisfaction." On this, ma'am, Lady Teazle, seeing Sir Peter in such danger, ran out of the room in strong hysterics, and Charles after her, calling out for [80 hartshorn and water; then, madam, they began to fight with swords.

81. **hartshorn:** smelling-salts. "What is used here are the whole horns of the common male deer which fall off every

Enter Crabtree.

Crabt. With pistols, nephew — pistols. I have it from undoubted authority.

Mrs. Can. O, Mr. Crabtree, then it is all true!

Crabt. Too true, indeed, madam, and Sir Peter is dangerously wounded —

Sir Benj. B. By a thrust in second quite through his left side ——

Crabt. By a bullet lodged in the thorax.

Mrs. Can. Mercy on me! Poor Sir Peter!

Crabt. Yes, madam; though Charles would have avoided the matter, if he could.

Mrs. Can. I knew Charles was the person.

Sir Benj. B. My uncle, I see, knows nothing of the matter.

Crabt. But Sir Peter taxed him with the basest ingratitude.

Sir Benj. B. That I told you, you know —

Crabt. Do, nephew, let me speak! and insisted on immediate —

Sir Benj. B. Just as I said —

Crabt. Odds life, nephew, allow others to know something too. A pair of pistols lay on the bureau (for Mr. Surface, it seems, had come home the night before late from Salthill, where he had been to

year. This species is the fallow deer; but some tell us, that the medicinal *hartshorn* should be that of the true hart or stag, called the red deer. The salt of hartshorn is a great sudorific and the spirit has all the virtues of volatile alkalies: it is used to bring people out of faintings by its pungency, holding it under the nose, and pouring down some drops of it in water." (Johnson's *Dictionary*, Edition of 1755.)

88. **thrust in second.** A thrust in second is a thrust delivered low, toward the left, under the adversary's blade.

see the Montem with a friend, who has a son at Eton), so, unluckily, the pistols were left charged.

Sir Benj. B. I heard nothing of this.

Crabt. Sir Peter forced Charles to take one, and they fired, it seems, pretty nearly together. Charles's shot took effect as I tell you, and Sir Peter's missed; but what is very extraordinary, the ball struck against a little bronze Shakespeare that stood over the fireplace, grazed out of the window, at a right angle, and wounded the postman, who was just coming to the door with a double letter from Northamptonshire.

Sir Benj. B. My uncle's account is more circumstantial, I confess; but I believe mine is the true one, for all that.

Lady Sneer. [*Aside.*] I am more interested in this affair than they imagine, and must have better information.

[*Exit* Lady SNEERWELL.

Sir Benj. B. Ah! Lady Sneerwell's alarm is very easily accounted for.

Crabt. Yes, yes, they certainly do say; but that's neither here nor there.

Mrs. Can. But, pray, where is Sir Peter at present?

Crabt. Oh! they brought him home, and he is

106. Salthill: a small hill on the Bath road, near Eton College.

107. Montem. "A triennial ceremony (named from the Latin *processus ad montem*, going to the hill) of the Eton boys. It consisted of a procession on Whit Tuesday to Salthill where the boys exacted money [called salt-money] from the passers-by, to meet the expenses at the university of the captain or senior scholar." (Aitken.)

There is an interesting account of the Montem in Disraeli's *Coningsby*.

now in the house, though the servants are ordered to deny him.

Mrs. Can. I believe so, and Lady Teazle, I suppose, attending him.

Crabt. Yes, yes; and I saw one of the faculty [135 enter just before me.

Sir Benj. B. Hey, who comes here?

Crabt. O, this is he: the physician, depend on't.

Mrs. Can. O, certainly: it must be the physician; and now we shall know. 140

Enter Sir Oliver Surface.

Crabt. Well, doctor, what hopes?

Mrs. Can. Ah, doctor, how's your patient?

Sir Benj. B. Now, doctor, is n't it a wound with a small sword?

Crabt. A bullet lodged in the thorax, for a hun- [145 dred!

Sir Oliver S. Doctor! a wound with a small sword! and a bullet in the thorax! Oons! are you mad, good people?

Sir Benj. B. Perhaps, sir, you are not a doctor? [150

Sir Oliver S. Truly, I am to thank you for my degree if I am.

Crabt. Only a friend of Sir Peter's, then, I presume. But, sir, you must have heard of his accident?

Sir Oliver S. Not a word! 155

Crabt. Not of his being dangerously wounded?

Sir Oliver S. The devil he is!

Sir Benj. B. Run through the body ——

Crabt. Shot in the breast ——

Sir Benj. B. By one Mr. Surface —— 160

Crabt. Ay, the younger.

135. **faculty**: i.e., of the medical profession. (Tatlock.)

Sir Oliver S. Hey! what the plague! you seem to differ strangely in your accounts: however, you agree that Sir Peter is dangerously wounded.

Sir Benj. B. O, yes, we agree there.

Crabt. Yes, yes, I believe there can be no doubt of that.

Sir Oliver S. Then, upon my word, for a person in that situation, he is the most imprudent man alive; for here he comes, walking as if nothing at all was [170 the matter.

Enter Sir PETER TEAZLE.

Odds heart, Sir Peter, you are come in good time. I promise you; for we had just given you over.

Sir Benj. B. Egad, uncle, this is the most sudden recovery!

Sir Oliver S. Why, man, what do you out of bed with a small sword through your body, and a bullet lodged in your thorax?

Sir Peter T. A small sword, and a bullet!

Sir Oliver S. Ay, these gentlemen would have [180 killed you without law or physic, and wanted to dub me a doctor, to make me an accomplice.

Sir Peter T. Why, what is all this?

Sir Benj. B. We rejoice, Sir Peter, that the story of the duel is not true, and are sincerely sorry for [185 your other misfortune.

Sir Peter T. So, so; all over the town already.

[*Aside.*

Crabt. Though, Sir Peter, you were certainly vastly to blame to marry at your years.

Sir Peter T. Sir, what business is that of yours? [190

Mrs. Can. Though, indeed, as Sir Peter made so good a husband, he's very much to be pitied.

Sir Peter T. Plague on your pity, ma'am! I desire none of it.

Sir Benj. B. However, Sir Peter, you must not mind the laughing and jests you will meet with on the occasion.

Sir Peter T. Sir, sir, I desire to be master in my own house.

Crabt. 'T is no uncommon case, that's one comfort.

Sir Peter T. I insist on being left to myself; without ceremony. I insist on your leaving my house directly.

Mrs. Can. Well, well, we are going, and depend on't we'll make the best report of it we can. [*Exit.*

Sir Peter T. Leave my house!

Crabt. And tell how hardly you've been treated. [*Exit.*

Sir Peter T. Leave my house!

Sir Benj. B. And how patiently you bear it. [*Exit.*

Sir Peter T. Fiends! vipers! furies! Oh! that their own venom would choke them!

Sir Oliver S. They are very provoking, indeed, Sir Peter.

Enter Rowley.

Rowley. I heard high words; what has ruffled you, sir?

Sir Peter T. Pshaw! what signifies asking? Do I ever pass a day without my vexations?

Rowley. Well, I'm not inquisitive.

Sir Oliver S. Well, Sir Peter, I have seen both my nephews in the manner we proposed.

Sir Peter T. A precious couple they are!

Rowley. Yes, and Sir Oliver is convinced that your judgment was right, Sir Peter.

Sir Oliver S. Yes, I find Joseph is indeed the [225 man, after all.

Rowley. Ay, as Sir Peter says, he is a man of sentiment.

Sir Oliver S. And acts up to the sentiments he professes. 230

Rowley. It certainly is edification to hear him talk.

Sir Oliver S. Oh, he's a model for the young men of the age! But how's this, Sir Peter? you don't join us in your friend Joseph's praise, as I expected.

Sir Peter T. Sir Oliver, we live in a damned [235 wicked world, and the fewer we praise the better.

Rowley. What! do you say so, Sir Peter, who were never mistaken in your life?

Sir Peter T. Pshaw! Plague on you both! I see by your sneering you have heard the whole affair. [240 I shall go mad among you!

Rowley. Then, to fret you no longer, Sir Peter, we are indeed acquainted with it all. I met Lady Teazle coming from Mr. Surface's so humbled, that she deigned to request me to be her advocate with [245 you.

Sir Peter T. And does Sir Oliver know all this?

Sir Oliver S. Every circumstance.

Sir Peter T. What, of the closet and the screen, hey? 250

232. **Oh, he's a model for the young men of the age!** Rowley and Sir Oliver are rallying Sir Peter with his own words: "No person could have more opportunity of judging of their hearts, and I was never mistaken in my life. Joseph is indeed a model for the young men of the age. He is a man of sentiment, and acts up to the sentiments he professes." (I, ii, 63-65.) It may be observed in passing that Sir Oliver did not hear the conversation from which he is quoting. (Brown.)

Sir Oliver S. Yes, yes, and the little French milliner. O, I have been vastly diverted with the story! Ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter T. 'T was very pleasant.

Sir Oliver S. I never laughed more in my life, I assure you. Ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter T. O, vastly diverting! Ha! ha! ha!

Rowley. To be sure, Joseph with his sentiments; ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, his sentiments! Ha! ha! ha! Hypocritical villain!

Sir Oliver S. Ay, and that rogue Charles to pull Sir Peter out of the closet: ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter T. Ha! ha! 't was devilish entertaining, to be sure!

Sir Oliver S. Ha! ha! ha! Egad, Sir Peter, I should like to have seen your face when the screen was thrown down: ha! ha!

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, my face when the screen was thrown down: ha! ha! ha! Oh, I must never show my head again!

Sir Oliver S. But come, come, it is n't fair to laugh at you neither, my old friend; though, upon my soul, I can't help it.

Sir Peter T. O pray don't restrain your mirth on my account; it does not hurt me at all! I laugh at the whole affair myself. Yes, yes, I think being a standing jest for all one's acquaintance a very happy situation. O yes, and then of a morning to read the paragraphs about Mr. S—, Lady T—, and Sir P—, will be so entertaining!

Rowley. Without affectation, Sir Peter, you may

279–80. **the paragraphs.** See note on **Tête-à-têtes, page 12.**

despise the ridicule of fools; but I see Lady Teazle going towards the next room. I am sure you must desire a reconciliation as earnestly as she does.

Sir Oliver S. Perhaps my being here prevents her coming to you. Well, I'll leave honest Rowley to mediate between you; but he must bring you all presently to Mr. Surface's, where I am now returning, if not to reclaim a libertine, at least to expose hypocrisy.

Sir Peter T. Ah, I'll be present at your discovering yourself there with all my heart; though 't is a vile unlucky place for discoveries.

Rowley. We'll follow. [*Exit* Sir OLIVER.

Sir Peter T. She is not coming here, you see, Rowley.

Rowley. No, but she has left the door of that room open, you perceive. See, she is in tears.

Sir Peter T. Certainly a little mortification appears very becoming in a wife. Don't you think it will do her good to let her pine a little?

Rowley. Oh, this is ungenerous in you!

Sir Peter T. Well, I know not what to think. You remember the letter I found of hers, evidently intended for Charles?

Rowley. A mere forgery, Sir Peter, laid in your way on purpose. This is one of the points which I intend Snake shall give you conviction of.

Sir Peter T. I wish I were once satisfied of that. She looks this way. What a remarkably elegant turn of the head she has! Rowley, I'll go to her.

Rowley. Certainly.

Sir Peter T. Though when it is known that we are reconciled, people will laugh at me ten times more.

Rowley. Let them laugh, and retort their malice only by showing them you are happy in spite of it.

Sir Peter T. I'faith, so I will! And if I'm not mistaken, we may yet be the happiest couple in the country.

Rowley. Nay, Sir Peter, he who once lays aside suspicion ——

Sir Peter T. Hold, Master Rowley! if you have any regard for me, let me never hear you utter anything like a sentiment. I have had enough of them to serve me the rest of my life. [*Exeunt.*

Scene III. *The Library in* Joseph Surface's *House.*

Enter Joseph Surface *and* Lady Sneerwell.

Lady Sneer. Impossible! Will not Sir Peter immediately be reconciled to Charles, and, of course, no longer oppose his union with Maria? The thought is distraction to me.

Joseph S. Can passion furnish a remedy?

Lady Sneer. No, nor cunning neither. O! I was a fool, an idiot, to league with such a blunderer!

Joseph S. Lady Sneerwell, I am the greatest sufferer; yet you see I bear the accident with calmness.

Lady Sneer. Because the disappointment does n't reach your heart; your interest only attached you to Maria. Had you felt for her what I have for that ungrateful libertine, neither your temper nor hypocrisy could prevent your showing the sharpness of your vexation.

Joseph S. But why should your reproaches fall on me for this disappointment?

Lady Sneer. Are you not the cause of it? Had you

not a sufficient field for your roguery in imposing upon Sir Peter, and supplanting your brother, but you [20 must endeavour to seduce his wife? I hate such an avarice of crimes; t' is an unfair monopoly, and never prospers.

Joseph S. Well, I admit I have been to blame. I confess I deviated from the direct road of wrong, [25 but I don't think we're so totally defeated neither.

Lady Sneer. No!

Joseph S. You tell me you have made a trial of Snake since we met, and that you still believe him faithful to us. 30

Lady Sneer. I do believe so.

Joseph S. And that he has undertaken, should it be necessary, to swear and prove, that Charles is at this time contracted by vows and honour to your ladyship, which some of his former letters to you will [35 serve to support?

Lady Sneer. This, indeed, might have assisted.

Joseph S. Come, come; it is not too late yet. [*Knocking at the door.*] But hark! this is probably my uncle, Sir Oliver; retire to that room, we'll consult [40 farther when he is gone.

Lady Sneer. Well, but if *he* should find you out too?

Joseph S. Oh, I have no fear of that. Sir Peter will hold his tongue for his own credit's sake; and you may depend on it I shall soon discover Sir Oliver's weak [45 side!

Lady Sneer. I have no diffidence of your abilities! only be constant to one roguery at a time.

[*Exit* Lady SNEERWELL.

Joseph S. I will, I will. So! 't is confounded hard, after such bad fortune, to be baited by one's con- [50

federate in evil. Well, at all events my character is so much better than Charles's, that I certainly — hey! — what! — this is not Sir Oliver, but old Stanley again. Plague on't that he should return to tease me just now. I shall have Sir Oliver come and find him here — [55 and ——

Enter Sir Oliver Surface.

Gad's life, Mr. Stanley, why have you come back to plague me at this time? You must not stay now, upon my word.

Sir Oliver S. Sir, I hear your uncle Oliver is ex- [60 pected here, and though he has been so penurious to you, I'll try what he'll do for me.

Joseph S. Sir, 't is impossible for you to stay now, so I must beg — come any other time, and I promise you, you shall be assisted. [65

Sir Oliver S. No; Sir Oliver and I must be acquainted.

Joseph S. Zounds, sir! then I insist on your quitting the room directly.

Sir Oliver S. Nay, sir —— 70

Joseph S. Sir, I insist on't: here, William! show this gentleman out. Since you compel me, sir, not one moment; this is such insolence! [*Going to push him out.*

Enter Charles Surface.

Charles S. Hey day! what's the matter now! What the devil, have you got hold of my little broker [75 here? Zounds, brother! don't hurt little Premium. What's the matter, my little fellow?

Joseph S. So! he has been with you too, has he?

Charles S. To be sure he has. Why he's as honest a little —— But sure, Joseph, you have not been [80 borrowing money too, have you?

Joseph S. Borrowing! no! But, brother, you know we expect Sir Oliver here every ——

Charles S. O Gad, that's true! Noll must n't find the little broker here, to be sure.

Joseph S. Yet Mr. Stanley insists ——

Charles S. Stanley! why his name's Premium.

Joseph S. No, sir, Stanley.

Charles S. No, no, Premium.

Joseph S. Well, no matter which — but ——

Charles S. Ay, ay, Stanley or Premium, 't is the same thing, as you say; for I suppose he goes by half a hundred names, besides A. B. at the coffee-house. [*Knocking.*

Joseph S. 'S death, here's Sir Oliver at the door. Now I beg, Mr. Stanley ——

Charles S. Ay, ay, and I beg, Mr. Premium ——

Sir Oliver S. Gentlemen ——

Joseph S. Sir, by heaven you shall go!

Charles S. Ay, out with him, certainly!

Sir Oliver S. This violence ——

Joseph S. Sir, 't is your own fault.

Charles S. Out with him, to be sure.

[*Both forcing* SIR OLIVER *out.*

Enter SIR PETER *and* LADY TEAZLE, MARIA, *and* ROWLEY.

Sir Peter T. My old friend, Sir Oliver; hey! What in the name of wonder; here are dutiful nephews; assault their uncle at a first visit!

Lady T. Indeed, Sir Oliver, 't was well we came in to rescue you.

Rowley. Truly, it was; for I perceive, Sir Oliver, the character of old Stanley was no protection to you.

Sir Oliver S. Nor of Premium either: the necessities

93–94. **A. B. at the coffee-house.** See the note on **dash and star,** page 8.

of the former could not extort a shilling from that benevolent gentleman; and now, egad, I stood a chance of faring worse than my ancestors, and being knocked down without being bid for.

Joseph S. Charles!

Charles S. Joseph!

Joseph S. 'T is now complete!

Charles S. Very!

Sir Oliver S. Sir Peter, my friend, and Rowley too — look on that elder nephew of mine. You know what he has already received from my bounty; and you also know how gladly I would have regarded half my fortune as held in trust for him; judge then my disappointment in discovering him to be destitute of faith, charity, and gratitude.

Sir Peter T. Sir Oliver, I should be more surprised at this declaration, if I had not myself found him to be mean, treacherous, and hypocritical.

Lady T. And if the gentleman pleads not guilty to these, pray let him call *me* to his character.

Sir Peter T. Then, I believe, we need add no more: if he knows himself, he will consider it as the most perfect punishment, that he is known to the world.

Charles S. If they talk this way to honesty, what will they say to me, by and by? [*Aside.*

Sir Oliver S. As for that prodigal, his brother, there ——

Charles S. Ay, now comes my turn; the damned family pictures will ruin me. [*Aside.*

Joseph S. Sir Oliver; uncle, will you honour me with a hearing?

Charles S. Now if Joseph would make one of his long speeches, I might recollect myself a little. [*Aside.*

Sir Peter T. I suppose you would undertake to [145 justify yourself entirely. [*To* JOSEPH.

Joseph S. I trust I could.

Sir Oliver S. Well, sir! and you could justify yourself too, I suppose?

Charles S. Not that I know of, Sir Oliver. 150

Sir Oliver S. What! Little Premium has been let too much into the secret, I suppose?

Charles S. True, sir; but they were *family* secrets, and should not be mentioned again, you know.

Rowley. Come, Sir Oliver, I know you cannot [155 speak of Charles's follies with anger.

Sir Oliver S. Odd's heart, no more can I; nor with gravity either. Sir Peter, do you know the rogue bargained with me for all his ancestors; sold me judges and generals by the foot, and maiden aunts as [160 cheap as broken china.

Charles S. To be sure, Sir Oliver, I did make a little free with the family canvas, that's the truth on't. My ancestors may rise in judgment against me, there's no denying it; but believe me sincere when I tell [165 you — and upon my soul I would not say so if I was not — that if I do not appear mortified at the exposure of my follies, it is because I feel at this moment the warmest satisfaction in seeing you, my liberal benefactor. 170

Sir Oliver S. Charles, I believe you; give me your hand again; the ill-looking little fellow over the settee has made your peace.

Charles S. Then, sir, my gratitude to the original is still increased. 175

Lady T. Yet, I believe, Sir Oliver, here is one whom Charles is still more anxious to be reconciled to.

[*Pointing to* MARIA.

Sir Oliver S. Oh, I have heard of his attachment there; and, with the young lady's pardon, if I construe right — that blush ——

Sir Peter T. Well, child, speak your sentiments!

Maria. Sir, I have little to say, but that I shall rejoice to hear that he is happy; for me — whatever claim I had to his affection, I willingly resign to one who has a better title.

Charles S. How, Maria!

Sir Peter T. Hey day! what's the mystery now? While he appeared an incorrigible rake, you would give your hand to no one else; and now that he is likely to reform, I'll warrant you won't have him.

Maria. His own heart and Lady Sneerwell know the cause.

Charles S. Lady Sneerwell!

Joseph S. Brother, it is with great concern I am obliged to speak on this point, but my regard to justice compels me, and Lady Sneerwell's injuries can no longer be concealed. [*Opens the door.*

Enter Lady Sneerwell.

Sir Peter T. So! another French milliner! Egad, he has one in every room of the house, I suppose.

Lady Sneer. Ungrateful Charles! Well may you be surprised, and feel for the indelicate situation your perfidy has forced me into.

Charles S. Pray, uncle, is this another plot of yours? For, as I have life, I don't understand it.

Joseph S. I believe, sir, there is but the evidence of one person more necessary to make it extremely clear.

Sir Peter T. And that person, I imagine, is Mr.

Snake. Rowley, you were perfectly right to bring him with us, and pray let him appear.

Rowley. Walk in, Mr. Snake.

Enter SNAKE.

I thought his testimony might be wanted; however, it happens unluckily that he comes to confront Lady Sneerwell, not to support her.

Lady Sneer. A villain! Treacherous to me at last! Speak, fellow; have you too conspired against me?

Snake. I beg your ladyship ten thousand pardons; you paid me extremely liberally for the lie in question; but I unfortunately have been offered double to speak the truth.

Sir Peter T. Plot and counter-plot, egad!

Lady Sneer. The torments of shame and disappointment on you all.

Lady T. Hold, Lady Sneerwell; before you go, let me thank you for the trouble you and that gentleman have taken, in writing letters from me to Charles, and answering them yourself; and let me also request you to make my respects to the scandalous college, of which you are president, and inform them that Lady Teazle, licentiate, begs leave to return the diploma they gave her, as she leaves off practice, and kills characters no longer.

Lady Sneer. You too, madam — provoking — insolent. May your husband live these fifty years. [*Exit.*

Sir Peter T. Oons! what a fury!

Lady T. A malicious creature, indeed!

Sir Peter T. Hey! Not for her last wish?

Lady T. O no!

Sir Oliver S. Well, sir, and what have you to say now?

Joseph S. Sir, I am so confounded, to find that Lady Sneerwell could be guilty of suborning Mr. Snake in this manner, to impose on us all, that I know not what to say; however, lest her revengeful spirit should prompt her to injure my brother, I had certainly better follow her directly. [*Exit.*

Sir Peter T. Moral to the last drop!

Sir Oliver S. Ay, and marry her, Joseph, if you can. Oil and vinegar, egad! you'll do very well together.

Rowley. I believe we have no more occasion for Mr. Snake at present?

Snake. Before I go, I beg pardon once for all, for whatever uneasiness I have been the humble instrument of causing to the parties present.

Sir Peter T. Well, well, you have made atonement by a good deed at last.

Snake. But I must request of the company that it shall never be known.

Sir Peter T. Hey! What the plague! Are you ashamed of having done a right thing once in your life?

Snake. Ah, sir! consider; I live by the badness of my character. I have nothing but my infamy to depend on! and if it were once known that I had been betrayed into an honest action, I should lose every friend I have in the world.

Sir Oliver S. Well, well; we'll not traduce you by saying anything in your praise, never fear.

[*Exit* Snake.

Sir Peter T. There's a precious rogue!

Lady T. See, Sir Oliver, there needs no persuasion now to reconcile your nephew and Maria.

Sir Oliver S. Ay, ay, that's as it should be, and egad we'll have the wedding to-morrow morning.

Charles S. Thank you, dear uncle!

Sir Peter T. What, you rogue! don't you ask the girl's consent first?

Charles S. Oh, I have done that a long time — a minute ago — and she has looked yes.

Maria. For shame, Charles! I protest, Sir Peter, there has not been a word.

Sir Oliver S. Well, then, the fewer the better. May your love for each other never know abatement!

Sir Peter T. And may you live as happily together as Lady Teazle and I intend to do!

Charles S. Rowley, my old friend, I am sure you congratulate me; and I suspect that I owe you much.

Sir Oliver S. You do indeed, Charles.

Rowley. If my efforts to serve you had not succeeded, you would have been in my debt for the attempt: but deserve to be happy, and you overpay me.

Sir Peter T. Ay, honest Rowley always said you would reform.

Charles S. Why, as to reforming, Sir Peter, I'll make no promises, and that I take to be a proof that I intend to set about it; but here shall be my monitor — my gentle guide. Ah! can I leave the virtuous path those eyes illumine?

Though thou, dear maid, shouldst wave thy beauty's sway,
Thou still must rule, because I will obey:

An humble fugitive from Folly view,
No sanctuary near but Love and you.
[*To the audience.*

You can, indeed, each anxious fear remove,
For even Scandal dies if you approve.

EPILOGUE

BY MR. COLMAN

SPOKEN BY LADY TEAZLE

I, WHO was late so volatile and gay,
Like a trade wind must now blow all one way,
Bend all my cares, my studies, and my vows,
To one dull rusty weathercock — my spouse!
So wills our virtuous bard — the motley Bayes
Of crying epilogues and laughing plays!
Old bachelors, who marry smart young wives,
Learn from our play to regulate your lives:
Each bring his dear to town, all faults upon her,
London will prove the very source of honour.
Plunged fairly in, like a cold bath it serves,
When principles relax, to brace the nerves.

Mr. Colman. George Colman, the Elder (1732–94), dramatist and manager or proprietor of various theatres. He was much interested in *The School for Scandal*, and, before its performance, read the play aloud to Burke, Reynolds, and others. In this Epilogue, he may be charged with being somewhat maladroit, in that he raises a doubt as to the sincerity of Lady Teazle's reformation, whereas from the play itself we are convinced of it.

5. **Bayes.** The chief character in *The Rehearsal* (1671), a farce by George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham. This farce was a satire upon the rhyming plays of the time, and parodies several passages in the plays of John Dryden, who was himself caricatured in the character of Bayes. *The Rehearsal* was succeeded on the stage by Sheridan's *The Critic*, a piece in much the same spirit. Here, as in the Epilogue to Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, the name Bayes means simply "dramatist," or "poet."

Such is my case; and yet I must deplore
That the gay dream of dissipation 's o'er.
And say, ye fair, was ever lively wife,
Born with a genius for the highest life,
Like me untimely blasted in her bloom,
Like me condemn'd to such a dismal doom?
Save money — when I just knew how to waste it!
Leave London — just as I began to taste it!
Must I then watch the early crowing cock,
The melancholy ticking of a clock;
In a lone rustic hall for ever pounded,
With dogs, cats, rats, and squalling brats surrounded?
With humble curate can I now retire
(While good Sir Peter boozes with the squire),
And at backgammon mortify my soul,
That pants for loo, or flutters at a vole?
Seven 's the main! Dear sound that must expire,
Lost at hot cockles round a Christmas fire!

28. **loo**: a game of cards popular at the time. The name is abbreviated from "lanterloo," originally the meaningless refrain in a topical song, popular in the seventeenth century. Cf. the refrain " Falero, lero, loo," in Wither's *I loved a Lass.*

28. **vole**: winning all the tricks in a deal: a " slam."

29. **Seven 's the main.** " A throw of the dice. In hazard [see note on page 66] the caster called his ' main ' by naming any number from five to nine, rattled the dice in the box, and threw them on the table. If the number of his main appeared, he won his stake." (Nettleton, quoting Boulton's *The Amusements of Old London.*)

To throw seven was considered very lucky. Cf. the mystic significance of the number seven in literature generally.

30. **hot cockles.** A game of forfeits " in which one player knelt down with his eyes covered, and being struck on the back by the others in turn, guessed who struck him." (Murray, *A New English Dictionary.*) It was a popular pastime at Christmas. Cf. Brand's *Popular Antiquities* and Irving's *Christmas Eve.*

The transient hour of fashion too soon spent,
Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell content!
Farewell the plumèd head, the cushioned tête,
That takes the cushion from its proper seat!
The spirit-stirring drum! card drums I mean,
Spadille — odd trick — pam — basto — king and queen!
And you, ye knockers, that, with brazen throat,
The welcome visitors' approach denote;
Farewell all quality of high renown,
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious town!
Farewell! your revels I partake no more,
And Lady Teazle's occupation's o'er!
All this I told our bard; he smiled, and said 't was clear,
I ought to play deep tragedy next year;
Meanwhile he drew wise morals from his play,
And in these solemn periods stalk'd away: —

32. **Farewell the tranquil mind.** A parody on Othello's soliloquy, III, iii, 347–77: —

> "O, now, for ever
> Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content!
> Farewell the plumed troop, and the big wars,
> That makes ambition virtue! O, farewell!
> Farewell the neighing steed, and the shrill trump,
> The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,
> The royal banner, and all quality,
> Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!
> And, O you mortal engines, whose rude throats
> The immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit,
> Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone!"

35. **card drums:** card parties.

36. **Spadille.** In the game of ombre, popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the ace of spades, the highest trump.

36. **pam:** the knave of clubs.

36. **basto:** the ace of clubs. Cf. Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, III.

"Blest were the fair like you! her faults who stopp'd,
And closed her follies when the curtain dropp'd!
No more in vice or error to engage,
Or play the fool at large on life's great stage."

50. **life's great stage.** Cf. "All the world 's a stage," *As You Like It*, II, vii, 139.

APPENDIX

AN ESSAY ON THE THEATRE; OR, A COMPARISON BETWEEN LAUGHING AND SENTIMENTAL COMEDY[1]

THE theatre, like all other amusements, has its fashions and its prejudices; and when satiated with its excellence, mankind begin to mistake change for improvement. For some years tragedy was the reigning entertainment; but of late it has entirely given way to comedy, and our best efforts are now exerted in these lighter kinds of composition. The pompous train, the swelling phrase, and the unnatural rant, are displaced for that natural portrait of human folly and frailty, of which all are judges, because all have sat for the picture.

But as in describing nature it is presented with a double face, either of mirth or sadness, our modern writers find themselves at a loss which chiefly to copy from; and it is now debated, whether the exhibition of human distress is likely to afford the mind more entertainment than that of human absurdity?

Comedy is defined by Aristotle to be a picture of the frailties of the lower part of mankind, to distinguish it from tragedy, which is an exhibition of the misfortunes of the great. When comedy, therefore, ascends to produce the characters of princes or generals upon the stage, it is out of its walks, since low life and middle life are entirely its object. The principal question, therefore, is, whether, in describing low or middle life, an exhibition of its follies be not preferable to a detail of its calamities? Or, in other words, which deserves the preference, — the weeping sentimental comedy so much in fashion at present, or the laughing, and even low comedy,

[1] This was contributed by Goldsmith to the *Westminster Magazine*, December, 1772. It is the most famous of many papers upon the subject, and is peculiarly significant because of Goldsmith's part in the controversy.

which seems to have been last exhibited by Vanbrugh and Cibber?

If we apply to authorities, all the great masters in the dramatic art have but one opinion. Their rule is, that as tragedy displays the calamities of the great, so comedy should excite our laughter by ridiculously exhibiting the follies of the lower part of mankind. Boileau, one of the best modern critics, asserts, that comedy will not admit of tragic distress:

> "Le comique, ennemi des soupirs et des p'eurs,
> N'admet point dans ses vers de tragiques douleurs."

Nor is this rule without the strongest foundation in nature, as the distresses of the mean by no means affect us so strongly as the calamities of the great. When tragedy exhibits to us some great man fallen from his height, and struggling with want and adversity, we feel his situation in the same manner as we suppose he himself must feel, and our pity is increased in proportion to the height from which he fell. On the contrary, we do not so strongly sympathise with one born in humbler circumstances, and encountering accidental distress; so that while we melt for Belisarius,[1] we scarcely give halfpence to the beggar who accosts us in the street. The one has our pity; the other our contempt. Distress, therefore, is the proper object of tragedy, since the great excite our pity by their fall; but not equally so of comedy, since the actors employed in it are originally so mean, that they sink but little by their fall.

Since the first origin of the stage, tragedy and comedy have run in distinct channels, and never till of late encroached upon the provinces of each other. Terence, who seems to have made the nearest approaches, always judiciously stops short before he comes to the downright pathetic; and yet he is even reproached by Cæsar for wanting the *vis comica*. All the other comic writers of antiquity aim only at rendering folly or vice ridiculous, but never exalt their

[1] One of the most famous generals of the Roman Emperor Justinian (527–65) in his campaigns against the Vandals and the Goths. Being accused of treachery, Belisarius was deprived of all his property and his eyes were put out. He returned to Constantinople, then the capital of the Empire, and sought his living by begging. In literature his story is perpetuated in Marmontel's *Belisaire* and in the legends of Casios, a Greek poet of 1120.

characters into buskined pomp, or make what Voltaire humorously calls *a tradesman's tragedy.*

Yet notwithstanding this weight of authority, and the universal practice of former ages, a new species of dramatic composition has been introduced, under the name of *sentimental* comedy, in which the virtues of private life are exhibited, rather than the vices exposed; and the distresses rather than the faults of mankind make our inteerst in the piece. These comedies have had of late great success, perhaps from their novelty, and also from their flattering every man in his favourite foible. In these plays almost all the characters are good, and exceedingly generous; they are lavish enough of their *tin* money on the stage; and though they want humour, have abundance of sentiment and feeling. If they happen to have faults or foibles, the spectator is taught, not only to pardon, but to applaud them, in consideration of the goodness of their hearts; so that folly, instead of being ridiculed, is commended, and the comedy aims at touching our passions without the power of being truly pathetic. In this manner we are likely to lose one great source of entertainment on the stage; for while the comic poet is invading the province of the tragic muse, he leaves her lovely sister quite neglected. Of this, however, he is no way solicitous, as he measures his fame by his profits.

But it will be said, that the theatre is formed to amuse mankind, and that it matters little, if this end be answered, by what means it is obtained. If mankind find delight in weeping at comedy, it would be cruel to abridge them in that or any other innocent pleasure. If those pieces are denied the name of comedies, yet call them by any other name and, if they are delightful, they are good, Their success, it will be said, is a mark of their merit, and it is only abridging our happiness to deny us an inlet to amusement.

These objections, however, are rather specious than solid. It is true, that amusement is a great object of the theatre, and it will be allowed that these sentimental pieces do often amuse us; but the question is, whether the true comedy would not amuse us more? The question is, whether a character supported throughout a piece, with its ridicule still attending, would not give us more delight than this species of bastard tragedy, which only is applauded because it is new?

A friend of mine, who was sitting unmoved at one of these sentimental pieces, was asked how he could be so indifferent: "Why, truly," says he, "as the hero is but a tradesman, it is indifferent to me whether he be turned out of his counting-house on Fish Street Hill, since he will still have enough left to open shop in St. Giles's."

The other objection is as ill-grounded; for though we should give these pieces another name, it will not mend their efficacy. It will continue a kind of *mulish* production, with all the defects of its opposite parents, and marked with sterility. If we are permitted to make comedy weep, we have an equal right to make tragedy laugh, and to set down in blank verse the jests and repartees of all the attendants in a funeral procession.

But there is one argument in favour of sentimental comedy, which will keep it on the stage, in spite of all that can be said against it. It is, of all others, the most easily written. Those abilities that can hammer out a novel are fully sufficient for the production of a sentimental comedy. It is only sufficient to raise the characters a little; to deck out the hero with a riband, or give the heroine a title; then to put an insipid dialogue, without character or humour, into their mouths, give them mighty good hearts, very fine clothes, furnish a new set of scenes, make a pathetic scene or two, with a sprinkling of tender melancholy conversation through the whole, and there is no doubt but all the ladies will cry, and all the gentlemen applaud.

Humour at present seems to be departing from the stage, and it will soon happen that our comic players will have nothing left for it but a fine coat and a song. It depends upon the audience whether they will actually drive those poor merry creatures from the stage, or sit at a play as gloomy as at the Tabernacle.[1] It is not easy to recover an art when once lost; and it will be but a just punishment, that when, by our being too fastidious, we have banished humour from the stage, we should ourselves be deprived of the art of laughing.

[1] The Tabernacle, in Moorfields, was the headquarters of George Whitefield's London work. He was a celebrated pulpit orator and revivalist, one of the founders of Methodism. An open-air audience which he addressed was said to number "about twenty thousand people." Whitefield preached with great effect throughout Great Britain, and made four visits to America. He was burlesqued in Samuel Foote's *The Minor*.

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It is perennially true that current magazines reflect with perfect accuracy the fashions, tastes, and interests of a period. In Sheridan's day, probably no periodical made a stronger appeal to the sort of men and women who are portrayed in *The School for Scandal* than *The Town and Country Magazine.*

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS to our CORRESPONDENTS.

The Author of the Address to Miss C l r k, desiring us to assign a Reason, in Case he does not find Admittance, we shall present our Readers with a Stanza from this curious Poem, in Defence of our Opinion, that it has not sufficient Merit for Insertion.

Leave the City heast away
Now it 's pleasing Month of May
Ev'ry Plant and ev'ry Flower
Smile beneath the friendly Shower
Oh! the charming Month of May
Sweetest, dearest Month of May
Budding Trees
Filling Peas,
Ev'ry thing seems glad and gay.

Edgar is much too imperfect for Insertion.

Leander's Address to Miss B——n, may arise from the Heart; but the head seems but little concerned in it.

Dr. Cook's last Favour is come to Hand, but from the great Length of temporary Matters, it must be deferred.

'Squire Morgan has mistaken his Talent.

L. M. to Miss P——L——y may amuse the Lady by his poetical Genius, but we do not think our Readers would be much amused with it.

Honestus does not arrive at Mediocrity in Poetry.

The Account of the new Comedy of The School for Scandal came too late.

An impartial Comparison between the Conduct of Dr. D—— and Mr. D——m does not come within our Plan.

The *Tête-à-Tête* from Queen-square has already been inserted.

The Letter from Paris requires being authenticated.

The private History of a certain Lady would be considered as invidious at this period.

A Country Gentleman's Opinion of the present State of Affairs, is rather out of Date.

The Animadversions on the Conduct of the King of Prussia, are not new.

Liberty Hall, a Poem, is a Plagiarism under another Title.

A Letter from Queen Anne-Street is upon too indelicate a Subject for admission.

Mentor in the Shades has some Merit; but we think it has appeared before in Print.

Under Consideration. Letters signed, A Patriot. — *Un Avanturier.* — Verax. — Leonora. — Dramaticus. — The splendid Shilling. — Amintor. — Ambulator. — A. S. B. — Reason. — A Bit of a Philosopher. — A Friend to Merit. — L. A. D. W. and several without Signatures.

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